

A MYSTERY STORY FOR BOYS

Johnny Longbow

ROY J. SNELL

PAT RAND

Mystery Stories for Boys

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By
ROY J. SNELL



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CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I	THE LAST ARROW.....	11
II	MYSTERIOUS FEAR.....	36
III	THE KNIFE IN THE TREE.....	54
IV	GREEN GOLD.....	64
V	A MAD MOOSE.....	70
VI	A STRANGE MEETING.....	80
VII	A LOOK BEYOND.....	95
VIII	A HAVEN OF REFUGE.....	105
IX	A MOVING ISLAND.....	121
X	TREACHERY IN THE NIGHT.....	135
XI	THE DANCING SHADOW.....	148
XII	THE GREAT BANSHEE.....	153
XIII	THE ANSWERED CHALLENGE....	164
XIV	A MYSTERIOUS VISIT IN THE NIGHT	169
XV	ON THE TRAIL OF THE GREAT BANSHEE	182
XVI	DOWN WITH THE AVALANCHE.	188
XVII	THE GIANT HUNCHBACK.....	202
XVIII	SAVED BY A LINE.....	216
XIX	GORDON DUNCAN'S STORY.....	233
XX	ADRIFT IN THE NIGHT.....	243
XXI	THE BATTLE OF THE BEARS.....	251
XXII	THE HUNCHBACK LEADS ON..	264
XXIII	THREE BEAR SKINS.....	271
XXIV	LEFT BEHIND.....	279
XXV	ADVENTURE IN PANTOMIME.....	285
XXVI	INTO THE ICE JAMB.....	293
XXVII	GREEN GOLD AT LAST.....	304

CHAPTER I

THE LAST ARROW

Johnny Thompson caught his breath as his feet shot from beneath him and he plunged into a rushing torrent of icy water. Thoughts flashed across his mind, mental pictures of homes and firesides. Echoes of laughter sounded in his ears.

Yet in this wilderness there was no laughter save the boisterous roar of an Arctic stream. There were no homes save those of the muskrat, the beaver and the white owl. The nearest cabin was fifty miles or more back. An all but impassable forest of scrub spruce, fir and pine lay between. There was time for but a flash back before Johnny found himself fighting for

his life against the torrent that was dragging him over rocks and sunken logs, splashing, ducking, pulling at him and threatening every moment to make an end of him.

But Johnny Thompson was not one to be beaten at once by this rushing torrent of northern Canada. Swimming strongly, warding off overhanging branches here, dodging great protruding boulders there, he still watched for a gently shelving bank that might offer him so much as a moment's rest. Since no such haven offered itself at once, he shot the rapids like a salmon.

A long, slender oiled canvas sack hung at his back. Twice this threatened to prove his undoing. It caught upon a tough willow branch and dragged him beneath the surface. Hardly had he freed himself than this same sack that apparently contained some stiff and stubborn affair of wood or steel caught in a rocky crevice to throw him high and wide. This involuntary pole vault left him with breath quite crushed out, but still struggling.

Suddenly, straight ahead, he caught sight of that which must prove his salvation or his undoing. Undermined by the torrent a green spruce tree lay squarely across his path.

Ten seconds to wonder. Would he be caught in the branches and drowned, or would he mount those same branches to freedom?

Sixty seconds of terrific battle and the splendid muscles of the boy won against relentless nature. Panting, triumphant, he sat astride the branches.

He was saved. There remained but to climb back to land. He was cold and wet. A roaring fire would remedy that. His blanket roll lay where he had tossed it on this side of the stream before he attempted to ford the treacherous tumult of water. The way back to his blankets would be rough going. He'd manage that.

But suddenly the smile on his face faded. His eyes had fallen upon the long sack that had hung at his back.

"Gone," he muttered, "torn open by the

same branch. And they're gone, all gone but one."

After adjusting the torn fastenings as best he could, he worked his way over the swaying tree trunk to solid earth. Then with sober face, he began making his way back over the rocks to the spot where his blanket roll lay. The situation was a serious one.

An hour later he sat before a roaring camp-fire of fir and balsam boughs. Dressed in a change of clothing and wrapped in a blanket, with his costume of an hour before sending clouds of steam toward the sky, he might have seemed the picture of contentment. He was far from contented. Presently he removed a small coffee pot from the fire and poured a cup of dark brown liquid. The aroma of coffee seemed good. He smiled. Then, without sugar or cream, he gulped it down black and hot. Nor did he eat after that. There was nothing to eat.

Had you chanced to look into his pack you would have found there neither firearms nor

ammunition. The nearest cabin that he knew of in all that vast northern wilderness was fifty miles back over an ill-defined trail. That cabin was deserted. He had slept there four nights back.

So Johnny sat by the fire meditating, thinking on matters of greater or less importance. And as he meditated, at a point somewhat more than a mile downstream, as the crow flies, a figure appeared among the rocks that kept the rushing stream in tumult.

A girl in her late teens, she moved out from among dark pines into a patch of light. The touches of sunset, lighting up her dark brown hair and adding a touch of gold to her ruddy freckled cheeks, transformed her for the moment into a goddess of the forest.

Sensing the change, she stood motionless as a statue for a full moment. Then, into that glory of the sunset she smiled, and the smile made her seem more alive than any wild thing that had ever ventured to the brink of that tumultuous stream.

In her hand she held a rustic bucket. Its handle, a thong of caribou sinew, its bottom a circle of wood cut from some fallen spruce tree, its sides white birchbark, this bucket seemed a part of the wilderness.

As she stooped to fill the rustic bucket, her eyes caught sight of some unusual object bobbing up and down in the water.

One moment, a flash of red and gold, she saw it. The next it was lost in a rush of foam. In a twinkling the bucket was dropped among the rocks and she went racing downstream in hot pursuit.

A hundred yards, leaping from boulder to boulder, she plunged onward until, red-cheeked, panting, she came upon an eddy, a still dark pool, twenty feet across, and at its very center, moving serenely about, was the coveted prize.

With the aid of the slow current and a long dry pole, she succeeded at last in coaxing the thing ashore.

As she grasped it, a trio of bright feathers

bound to a slender shaft came to view. She caught her breath again. And as she pricked her hand on the broad head sharp as a razor at the other end of the shaft, her face lost some of its heightened color.

Turning, she raced back to the spot where the crude bucket still rested. There, without pausing to complete her errand, she dashed up the slope to a spot where a tumbled-down cabin rested among the trees.

A man, very tall, very straight and quite old, a bearded patriarch, rose at her approach.

"Grandfather!" she exclaimed, almost in a whisper. "We must leave this cabin at once."

The old man threw her a questioning look. For answer she held up the arrow she had found floating feather up in the stream.

Taking it from her, he examined it closely in the waning light.

"White man," he pronounced at last, as if reading from a book. "Somewhat new at the game, but possessed of a considerable knowledge of the art. A very good arrow.

"We must go up," he said after a moment of silence. "We will go up at once."

They entered the cabin together. Some twenty minutes later, with well arranged packs on their backs, they emerged from the shadowy interior to go marching briskly down toward the banks of the rushing stream. There they began leaping from rock to rock. In this manner they traveled a considerable distance without leaving a single tell-tale footprint behind.

So they moved on into the twilight, a powerful old man and a short, sturdy girl, marched on into a wilderness that is acquainted only with the voice of the wolf, the caribou and the white owl.

Once as they paused for a moment's rest beside a great flat rock, the girl removed some object from her pack and held it up to the uncertain light.

"It's strange," the old man rumbled. "An arrow, a well-shaped, well-constructed arrow with a death-dealing steel point! Had it been

a shot gun shell, that would not have seemed strange. But an arrow!"

"But Grandfather, we—" The girl stroked a strong longbow that hung at her side.

"Yes, I know." The old man's smile was good to see. "But we are of a bygone race, at least I am. This is 1928. Except for such as we are, the bow and arrow are of the past. But see!" He started up. "It is getting dark."

A few yards farther down the strange pair left the stream's bank to go clambering up a rocky run. Even here they avoided snow. And so, marching sturdily forward, they faded into the gathering darkness and deep shadows of pines.

You have perhaps guessed that the arrow found bobbing its way downstream came from Johnny Thompson's quiver. In fact at the very moment when the old man and the girl left the cabin, he was engaged in the task of oiling two stout bows and waxing their strings. Having done this, he looked sorrowfully at the single broadhead arrow that remained in his

quiver, took one more long gulp of hot black coffee, then set to wondering what lay before him.

To be facing a wilderness alone with bows and arrows as one's sole means of securing food might seem bad enough. To have but one arrow; what could be worse? A missed shot, a shattering rattle against the rocks, and this arrow might be gone forever.

And then? Blunt arrows, sent crashing into the side of resting rabbit or sleeping ptarmigan would be as deadly as spear point when fired from Johnny's sixty-pound bow. There was wood all about for shafts. But what of feathers and weights for the tips? One might come upon a sleeping owl. Here would be feathers.

"And yet," he told himself, "I have not seen a living thing for three days. The country is deserted. But no, not quite. There was the caribou track."

Ah, yes, that very afternoon he had come upon the trail of a caribou. It had been this

very caribou that led him to disaster. The beast had crossed the river. In attempting to follow he had come near losing his life, and had lost all but one of his arrows.

"Ah, well," he sighed, "to-morrow my luck will turn. A single arrow is enough for a caribou and I am now on his side of the stream. I will take up the trail in the morning."

With that, after replenishing his fire, he rolled up in his blankets and prepared for a night's repose.

Was it the coffee? Was it hunger? Or was it the silence of the night in that strange land that robbed him of coveted slumber? For long his eyes remained closed. Yet sleep did not come.

At last, yielding to the inevitable, he opened his eyes wide to stare upward through sighing pine branches to the infinite heavens above, where a myriad stars twinkled and beamed as they appeared to leap across tossing clusters of pine needles.

Like a story told by a poet, a picture thrown

on the screen, his life of the past few months moved before him.

Arriving from dreamy tropical seas and deep tangled swamps of Central America, he had in late Autumn arrived at the mid-western city which was inseparably linked with his childhood.

There, as he felt the crisp tang of autumn mornings and caught the gleams of frost on the corn, he felt again the lure of the North.

Months of hot tropical sun lay behind him. He had come to loathe the soft warmth that saps men's energies, thins their blood and weakens their wills. He yearned now for the long white trail, the screaming of sled runners, the song of dogs that is an Arctic night.

But at this moment a fresh fancy seized him. Burton Bronson, an old-time friend, had by chance shown him a hunting bow with which he had performed marvelous feats. The wolf, the wild cat, mountain lion and bear had felt the bite of his broadhead arrows.

Johnny had been skeptical. Bronson had

demonstrated his power. Johnny had come to believe. He was at once fascinated by this new form of sport. The longbow, the arrow, and wide open spaces took him in hand.

Long weeks they led him over sand dunes, across broad prairies, through silent forests.

When weather became too bleak for out-of-doors sport, he had retreated to the cover of the North Shore Archery. There he had so perfected his form that no small game was safe from his straight speeding arrow.

Then it was that his longing for the North returned. On top of this came the resolve to stake his fortune for the immediate future on his recently acquired skill. He would go into the North with no other weapon than the bow and arrow. With these alone, as the savages had done before him, he would make his way northward through Canada until, fortune attending him, he should reach the headwaters of the mighty Yukon in time to witness that greatest of nature's panoramas, the Spring breakup on the river.

So here he was. Over many a long mile Fate had been kind to him. Indians and white men alike had treated him well. They had laughed good-naturedly at his weapons, but had admired the strength and skill he exhibited in using them. The Indians of the first trading post had dubbed him "Johnny Longbow." Johnny Longbow he was after that. He was not ashamed of the nickname, nor the things for which it stood.

Beside him now, there in the midst of the great white wilderness, lay his two bows. One was of yew wood, backed with calfskin thin as parchment; the other an affair of his own making. Carved from the hardest and toughest of wood, osage orange, this bow was the pride of his life. He loved and trusted it as a friend. It had never failed him.

"If only I had arrows for you!" he whispered now. "But we will have that caribou to-morrow."

With that he closed his eyes and fell asleep. Johnny Longbow's breakfast next morning

consisted of two cups of black coffee and a handful of sour berries he found clinging to their stems just as a premature winter had found them.

Placing his pack in the crotch of a tree and marking the spot well, he slung his handmade osage bow across his back, thrust his lone arrow sword-like through his belt, then marched forth into the crisp glory of Arctic morning, to seek out the lost trail of that lone caribou.

It was late afternoon when, with heart pounding painfully against his ribs, he stood neck deep among scrub spruce trees.

The scene before him was one to inspire an artist's brush or lend fire to a poet's pen. A young buck caribou, a superb creature of shining brown and glistening black, stood before him in a narrow circle of green. Walled in on every side by dark young fir trees, the wild creature's miniature pasture seemed to have been planned by some famous director for the setting of a scene in a wildwood drama.

The caribou was feeding toward him.

"Another minute, just one more," he told himself.

His watch ticked loudly. It seemed certain that the wild creature must hear. The snap of a twig off to the right came near spoiling it all. The caribou lifted its head. Johnny's unnerved hand all but lost its grip on his bow.

The day's trail had been long and tiresome. Over rocky slopes, down icy streams, across treacherous snows, the caribou had led the way until the boy, weak from lack of food, was near to the point where one gives up in despair. Twice, as if to tempt him, a snowshoe rabbit leaped from his path, only to pause among the rocks and stare at him. Twice he had strung his bow, twice nocked his single arrow for a shot. Twice he had told himself that a miss among those rocks meant a shattered shaft, that at most the rabbit offered but a meal or two of indifferent food. Twice he had slipped the arrow in his belt, had unstrung his bow to take up the task of dogged tracking.

"It's to be the caribou or nothing!" he had told himself. "A month's provision, or famine."

And now, here, just before him, feeding peacefully, was the caribou. For the moment he was well over at the far side of his narrow pasture. A few moments more, and he would be close enough for a sure shot, and then! The boy caught his breath as he thought what the speeding of that single arrow meant to him.

Closing his eyes, he saw himself, a load of meat across his shoulders, beating his way back to the last outpost of civilization where were feathers, wood and steel for the making of many arrows. Then again the picture went dark. He saw the shadow of his present self, struggling over long lost trails, eagerly sucking bitter bark or grubbing into frozen earth for some crude substance with which to allay his hunger.

"I must win!" he told himself stoutly. "I must not miss!"

And still, as the moments passed, as the caribou moved nearer and nearer, the zero hour

came closer to hand, he found his faith wavering.

"One arrow," he thought over and over, "only one."

But "Now! Now!" he breathed at last. "Can't wait any longer."

As the antlered monarch of the far north raised his head to stand there silent, listening, still as a statue, Johnny's bow twanged, his arrow sped.

With a bound high and free the wild creature leaped away.

One, two, three bounds, and he had cleared the spot of light green. Another, another and yet another, he went thrashing breast deep in the young firs.

"Missed!" Johnny groaned. "Missed! And he carries into the forest my only arrow!"

But what was this? Just as his head fell in dejection he saw the caribou make one more leap, high and wide, then come to a sudden stand. Still breast deep in darkest green, he

appeared to view the scene before another wild dash.

"Oh, for one more arrow!" the boy groaned.

"There is no other, so what's the use?"

In the forlorn hope that his lone arrow might by chance have glanced and fallen on the green, he moved toward the narrow circle of wild pasture.

Then suddenly he stood still. There had come to his sensitive ear a sound of movement in the brush.

"Not the caribou either," he told himself as his heart skipped a beat. "Some wild beast of prey, a bear or a wolf."

But no, a greater surprise awaited him. Before him, much closer to the caribou than to him, a khaki clad back appeared. A boyish head, an old cap, a pair of stout arms held high, a bow, a quiver of arrows. A second's suspense, and an arrow flew straight and fair at the statuesque caribou.

"Twon't do," Johnny told himself, rubbing his eyes. "This is Nineteen Twenty-eight.

Strange enough for me to be here. But a girl with only a bow and arrow in these wilds? It can't be!"

And yet it was. As he looked again the girl was still there. So too was the caribou.

"Two arrows, and still he stands there motionless. That creature, this place is bewitched. I'll break the spell."

He was about to lift his voice in a loud "hello" when the girl, turning half about, fitted a second arrow to her bow and let fly.

"Straight to the mark, as I live!"

Johnny spoke his thought out loud. "And still he stands."

The girl wheeled about to stare at him in blank surprise. Then, as surprise and fear left her, she exclaimed:

"The beast is surely charmed! I've shot him, and yet he does not stir!"

Suddenly the shining black antlers sank low. The whole head of the caribou disappeared in the brush. Still his body remained erect.

"Mystery here!" Johnny sprang forward.

The girl, as if in fear of losing the prize, started forward.

"It's all right," said Johnny. "He's yours. I missed him fair enough."

"You—you missed?" The girl's tone showed surprise.

Johnny did not hear.

"Mystery solved!" he shouted back a moment later. "When he made that last leap he landed so squarely on the tops of a half dozen young fir trees that they did what his legs no longer could. They supported him.

"But say!" he called. "It's queer. Come here, please."

As the girl advanced he had time for a brief study of her fine, strong, khaki clad figure.

"Eighteen or twenty. English or Scotch. An outdoor girl," was his mental comment.

"Question is," he smiled as the girl came close, "Who's caribou is it? Three arrows, all quite near the heart. Two are yours, one mine."

"You—yours?" The puzzled look of a moment before returned to the girl's face.

"Yes. I shot first. You did not see me. But there's my arrow.

"But really," his tone changed as the girl seemed suddenly crestfallen, "there's no need of mine and thine in the forest. I am glad as I can be to know that there's a fellow creature near. That was my last arrow."

"And you are alone?"

"Quite alone."

"You look hungry," she said suddenly.

"I am, a little. Haven't really eaten for—well, for some time. Luck went against me. Couldn't even get a fish."

"We'll take the caribou to camp," she said. "It's only a half mile, all down grade. Grandfather—"

She broke off quite suddenly as one does who has found himself in danger of saying too much.

"You—you have a camp of your own—" she hesitated, "perhaps—" Again she paused.

As Johnny watched, he read in her face signs of conflicting emotions. Native hospitality, a longing for companionship, youth calling to youth, were battling with fear. This much he understood. But why the fear? She had spoken of a grandfather. Surely then there could be no objection to his joining them in a feast off the venison they had secured.

"Perhaps," she began again. "Here," extending her quiver filled with arrows, "take these. We have others."

"I'll dress the deer and we'll divide it," said Johnny, exasperated by what seemed to him cool effrontery. He did not so much as look at the proffered arrows.

Hanging her quiver on a spruce bough, the girl assisted him in lifting the caribou to a strong bough and stringing him up. It was then that Johnny came to know of her superb strength.

"Like a man," he told himself.

She sat watching in silence as he performed his task. When, however, he had dressed the

deer, severed its head from its body and was studying the problem of a fair division without an axe or butcher's cleaver, she spoke again.

"Lift the fore parts to my shoulder," she said quietly. "I think we can carry it to camp."

That she had arrived at some decision as he worked Johnny guessed. What decision, and why? This he did not know.

The girl led the way. The going was rough. More than once she slipped and all but fell. Yet each time her recovery was that of the perfect woodsman, like the spring of a creature made of steel. Once she fell forward, and the caribou dropped to earth. Before Johnny could come to her aid she was up with a low laugh and lifted the burden to her shoulder once more.

"She's wonderful!" he told himself. "I hope
——"

He was not quite sure what it was he hoped. He had been a long time in the wilderness, had been facing starvation, too. He had not real-

ized until this moment how bleak and lonely it had been.

“But now—”

His thoughts were broken short off by the girl’s actions. She had come to a sudden stop.

“Drop—drop it down here.” Her words came uncertainly.

Johnny obeyed. The next instant she had disappeared into the brush that surrounded them on every side, nor had he seen which way she had taken.

“Gone,” he told himself.

Dismay overtook him. She might not return. There was something altogether strange about the whole affair. But half a caribou in a wilderness! Yes, she would return. So he sat down to wait, and as he waited, there came to him, wafted along by a gentle breeze, faint odors of campfire smoke and bacon frying.

CHAPTER II

MYSTERIOUS FEAR

In spite of his great hunger and the maddening odors that came to him, filling his heart with a wild desire to break his promise, to wait no longer, but dash into the strange camp, Johnny had fallen into a doze when the girl, silent as a snow bunting, returned.

She touched his arm. He jumped, stared blinkingly, then smiled.

"You are American," she said quietly.

"Yes."

"Do you know much of Canada?"

"Nothing much. Been over the border a month; came in from the northwest."

"I told Grandfather. Come."

She made as if to take up her share of the burden.

With a quick move Johnny threw the entire weight of the caribou squarely across his own shoulders.

"Lead on," he said.

She led the way in silence. Carefully pushing the branches aside, indicating by a downward glance a spot where the footing was uncertain, testing a half rotted log and rejecting it as treacherous, she played the part of a perfect guide until, with an air of finality, she parted the spruce branches to exclaim:

"There!"

As Johnny lowered his burden to the earth he found himself astonished at the sight before him. He had expected to see a hunter's lodge of some proportions, at least a homeseeker's cabin in fair state of preservation. Instead he found a mere lodge built of poles, bark and boughs. Walled in on three sides, with one side open to the campfire, it formed but a temporary abode.

"What can these people be doing in such a

place and so far from the haunts of man?" he asked himself.

He was destined to ask that question many times in the weeks that were to come.

But now his thoughts were broken off. The girl was speaking.

"Grandfather, this is the young man," she said simply as she nodded toward Johnny. "He's bringing his own venison."

"She had a hand in it," said Johnny modestly as a great, grizzled six-foot Scotchman, stooping low that he might pass out of the lodge, gave him a smile and offered a hand.

"He killed the caribou." The girl's laugh was low and pleasing. "After he had killed him I shot him twice just to make sure he was dead."

Then in a few words she narrated the adventure.

"Rather strange," the big Scot rumbled. "But see here, young man, you are an American, are you not?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then how is it that you are hunting with bow and arrow?"

"It's a bit of a fad, I suppose," said Johnny, not wishing to overplay his part. "But even in America we feel that some traditions and arts should be preserved. There's a lot of sport in really shooting straight and true with one of man's most ancient weapons. Don't you think so?"

"I do!" the old man's answer was emphatic. "And, furthermore, I believe the world would be better off if it had never smelled gunpowder. We as a generation—"

"But, Grandfather," the girl broke in, "he has not eaten for three days."

"No? Is that true?"

"Well,—nearly," Johnny admitted.

"There'll be time for talking by the evening campfire. Faye, bring out the broiler. I'll stir up the fire. We'll have you a broiled venison steak you'll not soon forget.

"Inside the cabin by the door you'll find a basin," the old man went on. "There's water

in the brook and soap in the little box under the eaves. In the north woods one lives the simple life. But you're welcome to such as we have."

Corn cakes fried in bacon grease, a rich, juicy steak broiled over the coals, made the feast all that Gordon Duncan, the old Scot, had promised it should be.

The meal over, pine chips that had been used in lieu of plates were tossed into the fire, aluminum cups, spoons and forks were cleansed at the brook, then for a space of time the three sat silently contemplating the fire.

As he had entered the shelter in search of the basin, Johnny had allowed his eyes to rove about the place. In one corner, tightly rolled up and tied with thongs, were two sleeping bags. In another stood a canvas receptacle which, he concluded, must contain bows and arrows. A single bow of powerful proportions stood against the back wall. Not a single firearm of any sort was in sight.

"Strange," he had thought to himself. "Our

meeting seems to have been arranged by some great director of destinies. And yet—”

He was thinking now of the uncertainty and great secrecy that had attended his entrance to their inner circle.

“What can one fear up here?” he thought.

At once the answer came back, “The law!”

Who has not read of the far reaching arm of the law in this land, the Mounted Police?

“Can they be fugitives from justice?” The thing seemed absurd. And yet?

As he sat by the fire, now watching its leaping flames and now staring into the mystery haunted darkness that lay all about him, he wondered anew, but most of all he listened, waiting for a word that would bid him join them here in the heart of the wilderness.

He realized as never before how lonely life in the Arctic could become, how uncertain life’s span. He had been on the verge of starvation. Now he was fed. His arrow, shot into the heart of the caribou, had not been broken. He had salvaged that. It lay close beside

him. Yet this was his only arrow. There had been a little thawing of snow on sunny slopes, but winter was still here. The low swish and sigh of the pines suggested a cold wind from the north with a possible blizzard. To be alone in such a storm, with but a single arrow—

As if reading the boy's thought, the old man spoke. "We can offer you little protection and no bed, but you are welcome to a place before our fire."

"I—I've got blankets." Johnny's tone was eager as he sprang to his feet. The smile he had seen on the girl's face returned. He believed that she too was pleased.

"Be a great pal," he told himself. "Strong as a man. And how she can shoot!"

To Gordon Duncan he said, "I'll go for my blankets."

"Are you sure you know the way?"

"It's by a bend in the river where three great pines shade the stream."

"I know the place," said the girl, springing up. "I—I'll take you as far as the river. You'll

have no trouble after that. There's something of a trail."

Together they left the narrow circle of golden light cast by the campfire and plunged into black shadows.

As her eyes became accustomed to the darkness, the girl appeared to experience no difficulty in following the mere suggestion of a trail that led down the hillside. Johnny noted the habit she had acquired of leaping from rock to rock and avoiding snowbanks. Hardly knowing why, he followed her example.

As they came to the bank of the rushing stream that even the winter's cold could not conquer, they paused for a moment to watch the moonlight play across its surface.

The girl moved quite close to him. Their shoulders nearly touched. He seemed to feel the splendid strength, the abounding life that was in her. She somehow seemed a part of it all, of the forest, the night and the rushing river.

"Do you know," she said quietly, "I'm glad

you've come. I—I hope you'll like us. Grandfather is a little queer, and he has bad spells with his heart. And—and we can't go back, not—not just yet.

"There's your trail." Her voice changed suddenly. "You won't get lost. But if you do, just cup your hands and shout like this: 'Whoo Hoo.'"

Her voice rose clear and penetrating above the rush of the river. An owl rose from a nearby tree and went flapping away. There was a scratching of feet on the hard packed snow. From above came the answering boom of the old man's voice.

She was gone.

Johnny turned to hurry on his way. Still his mind was not all on the uncertain trail. She had said they could not go back, not just yet. "Go back to what?" he asked himself. "And why not?" Surely it was strange. Yet he was very sure he was going to like them. He'd go where they went. Why not? He was adventuring, living in the wilderness with bow

and arrow. Curious they should be doing the same thing. Yes, he'd go with them.

An hour of difficult tracking and he was at his camp of the night before. Feeling not the least desire to loiter here, he slung his pack across his back and went trudging away toward that other camp.

As he neared a certain spot on the river trail, the moonlight seeping down through the overhanging boughs showed him footprints leading up the slope. It took but a single glance to enable him to recognize them. They had been made by the girl's moccasins.

Curiosity led him to follow this fresh trail. In a space of three minutes he was at the door of the substantial cabin, deserted but the day before by the girl and the old man.

"They were living here. They left this for a temporary shelter. I wonder why?"

He read the answer. They had discovered that some person besides themselves was in the country. How had they made the discovery? Why were they afraid?

"Time unravels all mysteries," he told himself. "Enough for to-night that I have found human companions and a place beside a camp-fire." He returned down the slope. A half hour later, he was lying propped by one elbow against his blanket roll, staring at the camp-fire of his newfound friends. A little way from him sat the girl.

On his return she had greeted him with one of those rare smiles. That was about all. Ten minutes passed into eternity as they sat there in silence, encircled by the dark mysteries of night and brooded over by the hush of a wilderness.

Johnny's mind was never idle. It was busy now. He was asking himself questions. Who was this girl, so ruddy and strong? And who was her grandfather? Had they always lived thus in the wilds, supporting themselves with bow and arrow alone? His fancy pictured them so; yet reason told him it could not be true. Why were they afraid? Afraid of being discovered? Whom did they fear?

"Oh well," he said to himself, "it is evident that they no longer fear me. I am from the United States and have not been long in Canada. That is enough."

A half formed resolve entered his mind, a resolve that was to gain in strength as the days passed. He would not leave the company of this strange pair until he had solved the mystery that hung over them like a ghostly fog in the night.

The fire burned low. The north wind swept in sharp and chilling. Rising, he took a small axe that lay close by and went into the outer darkness. The girl rose and followed silently.

Soon they returned, dragging heavy pine logs after them. He had noted with admiration that she chose a log as large and heavy as his own.

Three times they retreated into the darkness; three times returned heavily laden. Then, each working at the end of a log, they replenished the fire. Logs were piled high. Small

branches were thrown on. As the fire leaped up the girl spoke.

"Where were you going?" she asked.

"Why, nowhere in particular. Just bumming, you might say."

She looked at him in a peculiar way.

"Well," he said half apologetically, "it wasn't exactly that. Been in the North before, but not with bow and arrow; not Canada either. Alaska. The North called me back."

"I know." Her voice was low and deep. "It always does."

"As for the bow," he spoke again, "I'm a mere novice. But there's a charm to such hunting that does not come with firearms. And these primeval forests always have seemed to call to me. The wilderness has voices, a thousand voices."

The girl nodded.

"I took the dare that nature threw down to me," he said abruptly, "and here I am."

"But your arrows? You had only one."

"Lost the others yesterday in the river. It was deeper and swifter than I thought."

Rising, she went into the birchbark cabin. She returned at once with an arrow. She held it out to him.

"This," she said, "I believe is yours."

"Yes," said Johnny in great surprise. "You found it."

"It came bobbing along to me on the surface of the river. It's a fine arrow. I've asked the fairies of this northwood to bless it. Take it back; it may bring you good luck."

"So that—" Johnny broke off abruptly. He was about to say, "So that is how you knew I was near?" He would make no attempt to surprise these new friends into divulging their strange secret. No. He would try to prove himself worthy of their friendship and confidence.

As if conscious of that which went on within his mind, the girl lapsed again into silence.

When at last she spoke again her tones were deep and mellow like the low notes of a cello.

"Grandfather and I," she said, "have gone into the woods every year since I was ten. The bow and arrow are his hobby. They have become mine. He never uses firearms. He has dreadfully sensitive ears. The explosion of a shotgun drives him frantic.

"Always before," she went on after a pause, "we have come to the wilderness for pure pleasure, the joy of the out-of-doors. But this year—" She paused again as if for reflection. "This year we have gone farther than before."

Johnny caught his breath. He had thought she was about to reveal a secret, and didn't more than half want to hear it. A mystery half ripened is no mystery at all. He need not have feared.

"To-morrow," she said, "we will go farther north."

"Why?" The word slipped out unguarded.

She looked at him in silence, then said quite calmly, "I don't know why, not quite all together. This year Grandfather acts quite strangely. He tells me he sees signs."

"Of what?"

"He—he doesn't tell me that. Perhaps he doesn't quite know. He is very old; yet his mind is bright, clear as a bell. He—"

Suddenly the girl put out a hand to touch Johnny's lips. She had caught a sound that had escaped him. The old man was returning. Ten seconds later he came tramping in through the brush.

"Everything is splendid," he beamed. "Been five miles downstream. The trail is good. Country is opening up. To-morrow we will go on.

"Ah!" he sighed as he dropped on a bed of pine needles. "You know how to make a fire, you two. It feels good!" He rubbed his hands together with great satisfaction.

That night, ere he made up his bed of pine needles before the fire and rolled up in his blanket for a few hours of perfect repose, Johnny witnessed a curious and impressive ceremony.

As they sat there before the fire, the three of them, Gordon Duncan took from his pocket a small, well worn volume. After thumbing its pages for a moment, he found a place and began to read. The words of a very ancient poet, who had learned centuries ago to place his trust in a power that was higher and greater than all earthly things, came from the lips of the venerable Scot like a benediction.

When at last he closed the book and lifted his voice in petition, it was as if they were savages, children of nature, an old man, a girl and a boy, as if the earth were new again and they were asking the All Seeing One to send caribou, rabbit and ptarmigan, to withhold the cunning of the wolf and the power of the bear, to hold the bitter north wind in check and send the gentle south wind to fan their cheeks.

When it was over, when the old man and the girl had retired to their frail shelter for the night, and Johnny had wrapped himself in blankets before the fire of pine logs, he felt within him a glow of warmth and a sense of

security such as he had not experienced before in all his wanderings.

The next day a strange discovery was made. A fresh mystery pressed itself upon them. In the unraveling of this mystery, Faye Duncan was to take a fair part.

CHAPTER III

THE KNIFE IN THE TREE

Next morning as they sat munching corn bread and strips of caribou broiled on the coals, Gordon Duncan put down his coffee cup and turned to Johnny.

"Young man," he began, "in the home of my childhood on the crags of the Scottish Highlands, the word stranger spelled welcome. Here we have no home worthy of the name. Even this we are leaving for the unknown that lies just beyond. Your way leads down the river; or if you can so shape your course that it may be so, we would be glad to have you join us."

There was a gentleness and a warmth in the old man's tone that went to the boy's heart. Before making reply, however, he turned to-

ward the girl. At once he was rewarded by that frank and friendly smile.

"I am going nowhere in particular," he said. "I am thankful for human companionship, more thankful than I can tell. Yesterday I was in a bad way. It may be that you have come between me and starvation. I should be ungrateful indeed did I not remain with you with a hope that I might in some way repay your kindness."

"Young man," in Gordon Duncan's eyes shone a gleam of light, "in this world one seldom repays a kindness, an act of courtesy or a friendly lift along the way, but one may always pass it on to some other member of the great human family. He—but we are talking too long. The trail beckons."

Packs were soon made. Johnny was surprised at the lightness of the sleeping bags used by his friends. "Scarcely five pounds apiece," he told himself. Bacon, cornmeal, coffee, a few dried beans, three cans of condensed milk, such was the food supply of these

wanderers. Each took in his pack as much caribou as he could comfortably carry. When Johnny saw that the girl proposed to carry a full third of the load, he offered to carry her caribou meat.

As she received his offer, her face flushed and her lips parted as if with a quick retort. Then, seeming to sense the spirit in which the offer was made, she allowed those same lips to open in a friendly smile as she said:

"I am used to the load. Without it I should not be hungry at noontime. It is enough if you break trail for us."

Johnny soon realized the truth of this last remark. The effect of the slight thaw of two days before was gone. The snow on the sloping hillside, hard packed as it was by many an Arctic blast, offered a surface so smooth and hard that more than once his feet shot from beneath him and he went speeding straight down to the gentler slopes a hundred feet below.

To avoid following his example the old man

with his hunting knife cut steps across the perilous places.

Noon found them nearing a clump of pines. As they came close to it, some object quite like a rolling ball of snow moved swiftly before them.

At once Faye's pack was off her shoulder and her stout arms stringing her bow as she whispered,

"Birds. Ptarmigan. A whole covey of them!"

Next moment she and Johnny were off in swift pursuit.

After a half hour's exciting chase, they returned with four of these white quail of the Arctic. To Johnny's chagrin, Faye had out-shot him three to one.

"But you are not used to these birds," she said generously. "You'll learn soon enough."

The days were growing long. There seemed little reason for haste. For, where were they going, after all? They took time to build a

fire and prepare a hearty meal. The birds they saved for supper. For the present they feasted on caribou meat.

"It is well," said Gordon Duncan, "to build up muscle, fat and bone while you may. So you will be able in the time of want to withstand the pangs of hunger. Savage people everywhere know this. We in our sleek complacency of plenty too soon forget."

It was mid-afternoon when the thing happened which was destined to change the entire order of their lives and carry them away on a mad quest that might well end in disaster and death.

It often happens as one travels along life's pathway that he comes of a sudden to that which is to change the very nature of his being. But does he know it? More often than otherwise he does not. It was even so now. As the wandering trio came over the crest of a ridge and began to descend into a valley down a narrow run that led them back to the river, they saw before them a scraggy pine of unusual

height. Surrounded as it was by a low growth of cottonwoods, it seemed a beacon.

To one member of the party it was a beacon. Hardly had Gordon Duncan's eyes fallen upon it than he suddenly pressed a hand to his forehead to exclaim:

"The tree! As I live! The very tree!"

"Why Grandfather! What—" The girl looked at him in alarm.

He was gone. Leading on at a pace that was hard to follow, he headed directly for the lone pine.

Once there, he dropped on hands and knees to point at some object protruding from the gnarled trunk of the giant tree.

"The knife!" he said hoarsely. "The knife!"

At that he fell backward, panting for breath.

All the splendid color left Faye Duncan's cheeks as she bent over his prostrate form and began struggling with the buttons of his mackinaw and shirt.

"It's his heart," she said. "There's nothing

much we can do. He'll come round presently. But some day—"

She did not finish, but the wrinkles that came in her brow told all.

"But what does it mean?" said Johnny pointing to the hilt of a hunting knife that protruded a short two inches from the trunk of the pine. "Must have been there twenty years. A few years more and it would have been completely buried."

If Faye Duncan knew what that knife meant and why it had stirred up such violent emotions in her grandfather's breast, she did not say so. She sat staring at the thing that had brought tragedy so near.

Giving up the problem, Johnny kindled a small fire, then put water on to boil for coffee.

Presently the old man sat up to stare dully about him. The instant his eyes fell upon the knife hilt they were alight once more.

"Twenty-one years!" he muttered, pressing his forehead once more. "Twenty-one years!"

All these years; and now I have found it—perhaps too late.”

At that he began fumbling at an inside coat pocket. In the end he drew forth a small square packet. Having unrolled a wad of thin oiled cloth, he unfolded a square of soft white skin. On this, done perhaps in pencil and later traced with India ink, were many lines and strangely shaped figures. Here and there words were written.

Drawn involuntarily to his side, the boy and girl stared at the map with surprised and eager eyes.

Johnny read words written there: “The river,” “Mountains,” “The Pass,” “The cabin,” he read. And last, but not least, “Green Gold.”

Apparently quite unconscious of their presence, the old man placed a trembling finger on a certain spot and mumbled:

“We are here. The trail leads downstream, four miles perhaps. The river forks there. We cross the river below the fork, and ascend the upper fork. The trail leads over the mountains.

The cabin lies beyond the mountain, the cabin and green gold. A mine of green gold. That was Timmie's dream. But then, perhaps he was mad. But there was green gold, quantities of it, and so heavy, so—"

He looked up and for the first time became conscious of Faye and Johnny.

"We've found the tree," he said simply, as if they should know all about it. "The trail leads downstream a little way, then across the river."

By the haunted look in her eyes, Johnny read that Faye Duncan knew little regarding the strange turn affairs had taken.

"It's his heart," she whispered. "We must keep him quiet."

"Yes," she said to Gordon Duncan, "the trail leads downstream. We will take it to-morrow. For the night we will camp beneath this friendly old giant of a tree and rest."

"Rest!" said Gordon Duncan, a great weariness overtaking him. "Rest. That's what we need. And then," with a fresh eagerness, "then

the long, long trail. Green gold it was, green like the copper in the bed of the stream, but gold, real gold."

Johnny assisted in arranging a comfortable resting place for him, then he nursed his small fire along until it was a laughing, roaring young conflagration.

"The trail leads downstream and across the river," he thought to himself. "Fine chance!" He could catch the rush of waters a hundred yards away. That was the river. He had tried crossing that rushing torrent once, and had come near losing his life.

"Never again!" he told himself. "Unless in a boat. And where in all this wild land does one get so much as a birchbark canoe?"

As if reading his thoughts the old man sat up quite suddenly.

"Somewhere down the river," he said, "the land slopes away into low hills. Here the river is less rapid. It freezes over. If we get there before the breakup, we may cross on the ice. But that," he added, "is a long, long trail."

CHAPTER IV

GREEN GOLD

"A long, long trail." The old man's words echoed in Johnny's ears as half an hour later, he sat before the fire of great glowing logs. Chilled by the cold and the dark, warmed by the golden glow of human companionship, he sat there half asleep, when the girl spoke.

Strangely enough, her words echoed his thoughts.

"A long, long trail," she was saying in a tone that was resonant with mystery and longing.

"He has come upon something," she said after a moment of silence, "from out his past." She turned to nod at the rude brush shelter beneath which, deep in his sleeping bag, the old man slumbered. Worn out by excitement

and his sudden heart attack, he had yielded to his granddaughter's entreaties, and retired early.

As for the girl and the boy, nothing was further from their thought than sleep. They had come to a valley of decision. This they knew.

"He will go," the girl said, glancing again at the sleeping one. "That trail has to do with his past. More than twenty years ago, with a partner called Timmie, he went into these mountains prospecting. I know little enough about it. What I know my mother told me. She's dead now; been dead eight years. He is all I have, and I am his only grandchild."

Once more, save for the little circle of light sent out by the campfire, all was darkness. Save for the snap and crack of burning logs, all was silence.

A light wind stirred the branches of the giant pine beneath which they had camped. As if endeavoring to tell the secret of the hunt-

ing knife buried deep in its heart, it sighed and whispered with the breeze.

"He came back once, my mother told me," the girl went on at last. "It was a whole year later. Someone found him wandering in the forest. He was snow-blind and delirious. In the long weeks of sickness that followed he babbled of Timmie, of a mine of green gold, and of a knife driven into a tree.

"That," she said, pointing to the giant pine, "is the tree. It must be. And that is the knife."

"But what of Timmie? What of green gold?" Johnny's voice was low.

"I don't know. I only know," she said slowly, "that he will go all the way over that long, long trail. It is his last great adventure. He may not live to complete it. There is his heart. He may—"

She became silent. Cupping her chin in her hands, she stared at the fire.

"Do you know," she said at last, without changing her position, "our home is a wonderful place. It's only a cottage. But a cottage

may be quite wonderful. In summer vines grow all over it, and old fashioned roses bloom by its side. The song sparrow, quite unafraid, builds her nest in the vines and squirrels come from the woods to sit on our doorstep. It's home."

She repeated the word softly, "Home. Nothing in the world could be more wonderful than a home."

Again silence, and the night closed in upon them.

"You are thinking," said the girl at last.

"I was thinking of you and of your grandfather."

"Grandfather is well worthy of your thoughts. He gave his two sons to his country. The war, that terrible war! They never came back. One was my father. I—I think my mother died of grief. But Grandfather, he just carried on."

Yes, Johnny believed Gordon Duncan worthy of his thoughts. For the moment, however, he was thinking of the girl, following

her in his mind's eye over that long, long trail marked out on Gordon Duncan's map; saw her making her way forward staunchly, fearlessly into the great unknown with an old man as her only companion.

"And then death overtakes her grandfather," he whispered to himself.

He tried to picture her making her way alone, back over those endless perilous miles.

"It can't be done," he told himself again.

A sudden resolve brought him sitting bolt upright.

"That green gold interests me," he said in as quiet a tone as he could command.

"You don't believe there is such a thing?"

He read incredulity in the girl's words.

"Stranger things have been discovered."

Of a sudden the meaning of his words came to her.

"You will go with us?"

Her hand was on his arm, her eyes searching his face.

"I have nothing more worth while to do."

"Oh!" she breathed, and again, "Oh!" He felt the pressure of her hand on his arm, that was all.

For a long time after that there was silence.

The next day they took up that long, long trail, and the day following saw one member of the party very near to the end of all trails.

CHAPTER V

A MAD MOOSE

Johnny Thompson was tired. He was hungry, and was feeling down on his luck. He had hunted the rugged hills since early morning, yet no game had gone into his bag save one great white owl.

"I wonder where Faye is?" he thought to himself. "Hoped I'd meet her on this ridge."

He still hoped this. It was a long, lonely tramp back to camp, and he was a sociable being. Besides, he felt rather sure that she, like himself, had met with little luck, and misery loves company.

On the morning of that second day after the momentous decision they found themselves below the fork of the river, standing on the bank of a tumultuous stream. Beyond this ice-

rimmed torrent lay Gordon Duncan's promised land. How were they to bridge the chasm? It seemed certain that Gordon Duncan was right. Once the stream left the high, rocky hills, its mad rush must be abated. They might then cross upon the ice, or at least on a raft.

But their supply of provisions was low. The way was long. Gordon Duncan was not yet restored to his full strength. Having found a rocky shelf walled in by nature on three sides, they decided to give the day over to hunting. Gordon Duncan would make camp and prepare a supply of wood. Johnny and the girl would hunt with bow and arrow. The ground seemed suited for the chase. Here and there were treeless spots overgrown with blueberry bushes. Where the wind had swept the snow, frozen berries clung stubbornly to their stems. Ptarmigan might be feeding here. Willow bushes close to the river bank showed fresh markings done by snowshoe rabbits. Once during the previous day they had chanced upon a spot where a caribou had come

gliding down a steep slope to swim the river.

"He may have recrossed lower down," Johnny had said.

So they had gone hunting, the two of them, but not together. A narrow run led away to the left from their camp. It was agreed that Johnny should take the left slope of this run and Faye the right. They might meet on the ridge above.

Since he was ready first, Johnny had struck out alone up the slope. He had heard nothing, seen nothing of the girl all day.

Little game had come his way. Once a ptarmigan had gone fluttering out from a clump of blueberries. He had lost himself at once in tall brush. A great white owl hooted at him. He had bagged him at once, not for food, but because of his broad feathers. He must make more arrows. There was an abundance of wood. Gordon Duncan had offered him steel points. He must provide his own feathers.

The land where he stood was rough, rocky

and rolling. In places dark tamarack stood so thick in the narrow bottoms that it was impossible to pass. To his amazement, as he stood there looking, listening, the sound of a tremendous tearing and thrashing suddenly smote his startled senses. No sound came to him save the crashing of brush and rending of branches, yet even as he looked he caught a gleam of bright red among the tamarack trees.

"That's strange," he told himself, involuntarily tightening his grip on the six foot bow. "Can't be a bird. Too big. I'll see what's going on."

Catching at a branch here, another there, without a sound he let himself down the slope. As he dropped lower the spot of color was lost to his view. This did not disturb him. His sense of location was splendid. A tree taller than its fellows, a branch twisted off by some storm, a pine squirrel's nest, these were his beacons. If he needed further guidance, the surprising tumult continued.

Then of a sudden as he rounded a clump of trees he saw it all at a glance. With a checked cry of surprise he stepped swiftly back to grip his bow and draw an arrow.

His movement was not missed. For a space of ten seconds silence reigned in that bit of northern wild. Then, as his bow sang taut a red-eyed fury, a giant of that wilderness, a bull moose, plunged head on, straight at him as he crouched for a shot.

A bull moose, interrupted in his display of anger, is a terrible creature to behold. As the boy looked into his bloodshot eyes, as he took in at once his huge head, his broad spiked antlers, his powerful neck, he wondered about his chances for life, and in the flash of a second knew as never before what a glorious possession life was. Yet he did not waver for an instant. Another life was at stake, the life of one without means of defense.

In that tense ten seconds before the moose charged he had seen that which caused him to doubt the accuracy of his vision. The flaming

red spot in the top of the young tamarack tree was a red sweater worn by Faye Duncan. He had not seen that sweater before. She had worn a gray mackinaw in their travels.

But now, still crouching, he waited his shot. It must be well aimed, back of the shoulder, a perfect shot, or—

Twang! The arrow flew. The next instant, with agility born of long training, he dropped sideways and backward. He was not a second too soon. The terrible impact of that powerful head, the awful rending of those spiked antlers; what chance had a boy against these?

With all the force and fury of a crazed elephant, the moose went thundering straight on.

With his senses reeling, the boy fought his way into a standing position in the tangle of briars and young trees, then drew another arrow.

It was well that he found himself so prepared, for the moose, having checked himself in his mad career, turned and charged again. This time, only Providence could have saved

him. Enmeshed as he was in the underbrush, he was in no position to dodge. A small tree, directly between him and the charging terror, saved him.

Blinded by rage, the moose charged straight into the tree. The sound of the impact was like the dropping of a pile driver. The stout tree snapped off at the roots. But the great beast was stopped.

It was enough. Again the bow twanged. A moment later the giant moose lay beating the brush in his death throes.

"Well," Johnny said, turning to the girl, who by this time had climbed down from the tree, "that's what I call close."

The look on her sunbrowned face was deeply serious. "Yes, it was. I am sorry to put you in such grave danger."

"Oh, that!" he said, shrugging. "It wasn't great. I could have climbed a tree. Then there would have been two of us." He laughed.

"But you didn't." The look on the girl's face

was still serious. "I have to thank you for that."

"It's all in a day's adventure," said Johnny. "Mystery and adventure add to the joy of life. Meanwhile, between us, we have a supply of food."

"Yes, and such a supply!"

"We had better take as much as we can carry," Johnny sighed. He was thinking of the weary trek back to camp. "The part we can't carry away on our further journeys we can hide up in the rocks where foxes and wolverines can't get at it. It's a good thing to have a storehouse to which one may return."

The girl agreed. Drawing her hunting knife, she assisted him quite skilfully in skinning the great beast and preparing the meat for packing.

Once as she straightened up, he read in her eyes a question. She was looking at the skin which he thought of only as waste product.

"I've seen pictures of boats made of skin drawn over a framework of wood," she said.

"The Eskimos make them so. Large ones. Thirty-five feet long."

"This skin is tough," she said. "It's large, too. I wonder—"

"Hate to trust it," said Johnny. "Ice might cut a hole in it, then where'd you be? Fresh water ice isn't like salt water ice. Salt water ice is crumbly. Fresh water ice is like flint. It gets a cutting edge."

She said no more.

"Guess we're ready," Johnny said a few moments later.

Wrapping a great piece of dark red meat in a square of skin, he lifted it to her shoulders.

"Carry it?" he said.

"Easy."

"All right. Let's go."

He felt like a brute, loading a girl so; yet in future their lives might depend upon that meat. Night was approaching. To return in the dark was out of the question. And who

could say what the little foxes, the wolves and wolverines would do to that dead moose during the night?

So they trudged on with weary limbs, but light hearts. As the darkness deepened there came over Johnny a feeling that was hard to analyze. It was a pleasing sensation, and had to do with the girl. He was her guardian, her protector. This day, with his bow and arrow he had saved her life. There could be no question about that. The tree she had climbed was partially dead. In time, under the mad bull's wild onslaught, it must have fallen.

"And then," he shuddered at the thought.

"Do you know," she said quite suddenly, "I didn't do a thing to that moose? Not a thing."

"Except invade his territory in a bright red sweater," Johnny chuckled. "That was enough."

CHAPTER VI

A STRANGE MEETING

"That moose was very far north," said Gordon Duncan, as they sat dreaming by the fire after their first meal of moose steak. "One seldom finds them here. He was alone. Moose and men are like that sometimes. They prefer to live alone. Timmie was that way. He longed for solitude."

The old man's eyes were half closed. He appeared to be living in the past. "Yes," he mused, "Timmie liked me. He promised to wait for me back there behind the mountains. But he liked to be alone. He's waiting there still, behind the mountains."

Johnny's lips were parted for a question regarding this long lost partner and the green gold, but feeling the pressure of the girl's hand on his arm, he left the question unasked.

"She's afraid of getting him excited and bringing on another attack," he thought to himself.

That night as he lay rolled in his blankets and the others slept farther back in the cave-like shelter, he fell to wondering about the strange pair. Why had they gone so far into the wilderness? Why had they appeared to be afraid of other human beings? Why, in the end, had they lost all their fear of him and accepted him as a traveling companion? How much was to be expected from the future? Was the old man's partly told tale of a lost partner and the finding of green gold purely a work of the imagination, a fairy story, or was it all true? Would they find Timmie? Was he waiting still? Would the green gold be there? Was there much green gold? Was it valuable? Was—

So, wondering on and on, he fell asleep.

Next day, as they entered a narrow valley, after toiling down a treacherous slope, they came quite suddenly upon a well marked trail.

Trees had been blazed here and there, and brush cleared away. True, there were no marks of recent travel. Only here and there were signs that told of someone passing weeks, perhaps months before. This trail came from the left, down a narrow ravine, then paralleled the river on its way northward.

For a long time after discovering this trail, Gordon Duncan stood quite motionless, apparently buried in deep thought.

When at last he led the way onward, it was to take up this trail. This he did in silence. Not a word was uttered by any member of the party.

To Johnny this silence was eloquent. What had passed in Gordon Duncan's mind? Had he read in this freshly discovered trail signs of danger? Had he feared that his plans might be brought to nought? Had he, in the end, decided to risk it, to take the chance, to follow the trail? To all these questions Johnny could find no certain answer.

Noon came. They ate a cold lunch, then

pressed forward. This day the old man seemed eager and tireless.

"There's more to him than I thought," Johnny told himself as he mopped his brow. "He may have a trick heart, but he certainly can cover the miles, may live to see us all in our graves yet."

By mid-afternoon they were passing over a level stretch of forest. To the right, the left, before, behind, short stout fir trees stood like sentries. The silence about them was oppressive. Not a branch quivered, not a pine needle stirred. When a white owl rose and went flap-flapping away, his wings beat noisily.

In a moment he was gone, and only the steady pat-pat of feet on the trail was to be heard.

Then slowly, as in a dream, there came to their overstrained ears a sound. Faint, indistinct, it seemed at first but the approach of wind through the treetops.

As they marched straight on this sound took form, the sound of many small tinkling bells.

"Bells!" the girl whispered, stopping short in her tracks. "Sleighbells. A dog team." She clutched at her mackinaw as if to still the beating of her heart.

Without a word, the old man turned and marched away at right angles to the trail. There was no concealing their tracks here. The ground was level, the soft snow ten inches deep. Soon, however, they came to a barren ridge. Here they might walk upon rocks. Soon they were lost from sight in a dark clump of fir trees.

There, breathing silently, uttering not a word, they waited.

"Why all this secrecy?" Johnny asked himself. "They know; I do not." He felt annoyed by it all. He turned to the girl, and was about to speak when, putting one hand to her lips, she pointed with the other.

A stout dog team had appeared down the trail. Behind the sled, clad in the blue trousers and red jacket of the Mounties, trotted a strapping six-footer.

"It's all right." A look of relief spread over Gordon Duncan's face. "It's Corporal Simons of the Mounted. He has been in the wilderness for months. We'll go to meet him. He may be able to tell us of a way across the river."

"Queer business," Johnny thought to himself as he followed Gordon Duncan back to the trail.

"My old friend Gordon Duncan, as I live!" exclaimed the sturdy Corporal as he caught sight of them. "And Faye. But Man!" he exclaimed. "Why so far back into this great beyond? Is it safe? You with your bows and arrows."

"No place is far in this fair land of ours," said Gordon Duncan. "As for the bows and arrows, you'll find fresh meat in our packs."

"That's more than you'll find in mine," said the Corporal, "but I've been traveling light and fast on the King's business. Sad business it is to be, I fear. But say! The sun is about down. Back on my trail a half mile or so is a cabin of a sort. There's a rough fireplace and a Dutch

oven on the hearth. I thought of putting up there for the night. Since you're here I'll turn back. When a man's been on the trail among Indians and Eskimos he welcomes a woman's hand at the cooking. I've a few supplies back there." He gave Faye a warm smile.

"But who is this?" There was a note of distrust in his tone as he spoke. He had seen Johnny for the first time.

"Only another nimrod we picked up by the way," said Gordon Duncan.

"Well, we'll be getting on. Gee!" the Corporal spoke to his leader. The team whirled about. Grasping Faye's pack, the driver dropped it on the sled, then tossed her after it.

"No sort of thing for a girl to be doing," he grumbled, "packing her way through these wilds."

An hour later Johnny found himself seated at the corner of a rude stone fireplace. Before the fire, enjoying their pipes, sat Gordon Duncan and the Corporal. From the hearth came delicious odors. From the Corporal's meager

supply of stores Faye had secured the proper ingredients for a cake. It was now browning to a turn in the Dutch oven.

As the boy sat there dreaming and wondering about many things he caught the voice of the Corporal. He was telling of some recent happening.

"What do you suppose happened to the trader?" he demanded of Gordon Duncan.

"Anything might. Snow-blindness, blizzard, wolves, an overflow on the river."

"Fact is he didn't arrive." The Corporal's voice rose. "Those Caribou Eskimos have come to depend upon him for ammunition. So there they are. And there they'll be starved in their tents. I can do nothing for them. Should I try to return with supplies it would be too late."

"It's as I have always said," Gordon Duncan's tone was low and deep. "The natives are better off without us. They lived before we came. How? By the bow, the spear, the snare and the deadfall. But now we have taught

them to use firearms and if there is no ammunition they must starve.

"Two hundred miles, did you say?" He rose and began pacing the cabin floor. "It is incredible that men should starve when we are so near. There must be a way."

"But there is no food here," said the Corporal. "A dozen rounds of provision here in this cabin. You chanced on a moose yesterday; otherwise you would be hungry, too."

"But the caribou will be flooding in from the Southwest."

"In another month, perhaps sooner. What does it matter? I do not have ammunition. Neither do you. You have only your bows and arrows."

"Corporal Simons," the old man paused to bang the table with his fist, "with bows and arrows we will save them. This young man, if he will, and Faye will go with me. We will show you what primitive weapons will do."

"Calm yourself." The Corporal's tone showed consternation. "You wouldn't drag a

young woman into that barren land. I tell you they are starving. Desperate. Who can say what they might do? And after all," he added, "they are but Eskimos, mere savages. It is sad, but the world will not miss them."

"There are no savages," said Gordon Duncan, resuming his place by the fire. "In the eyes of the All Seeing One, all men are the same. In the past many a white man, many a member of your force, has owed his life to these simple people. Is it not so? Then we owe them their lives in return."

It was evident to Johnny that the Corporal knew something of Gordon Duncan's state of health, for at a look from Faye he said no more.

A half hour later they were seated round a rough board table graced by such a feast as only a Scotch girl accustomed to the wilds could have spread before them.

The evening meal over, Gordon Duncan dropped into a great rustic chair before the fire. As Johnny watched he saw the old man

start as a change came over him. A battle of conflicting emotions played across his expressive face. Twice he half rose in his chair. Many times he clenched his fists tight. Three times he turned to speak to the Corporal. At last, as he sank down deep in his chair, a look of resignation came over his face. Peace now reigned where a battle had raged. He was soon sleeping in his chair.

Johnny could not read all the story that had been recorded there. He knew too little regarding the two possible courses of action that lay before them and the purposes and emotions that were back of them. He did know that an idea had taken possession of Gordon Duncan. He had had a partner in the past. They had found some metal. He called it green gold. Was it? Whatever it was, the whole soul of the old man had been bent on finding that partner and his treasure.

Now a man, an officer of the law, had told him of a starving people. He had at once conceived of a plan for helping them. Just what

those plans were Johnny did not clearly know. Of one thing he felt certain. Having observed the old man and understanding something of his deep convictions, he felt sure that he would feel compelled to go to the aid of those who faced starvation.

"Faye will go," the old man had said.

"Will I?" Johnny asked himself this question in all seriousness, but did not attempt to answer it. He had seen much of life, had lived in many climes; but to go into the great white wilderness to a desperate tribe of starving half savages in the company of an old man and a girl, armed only with bows and arrows—

"What good could we possibly do?" he asked himself.

The simple household duties of the cabin done, Faye joined them beside the fire.

She had been sitting there but a short time when a great shaggy dog, one of the Corporal's team, rose from the floor and approached her. After kissing her hand he laid his shaggy head in her lap.

"He knows you," said the Corporal in surprise.

"Yes," she said. "He used to belong to a next door neighbor. You must have bought him from that man. We are great friends," she said, addressing the dog. "Aren't we, Tico?"

At the sound of the name Tico, the dog gave forth a low woof, then stood staring intently into her eyes.

"Tell you what," the Corporal said quite suddenly. "I'll give him to you. Then if you go—" he hesitated, "wherever you go, he'll be company, protector and guide.

"He's not much account in the team, anyway," he added half apologetically. "Too old when I took him. Dogs need to be trained young."

"I—I—why, thank you! That would be grand, wouldn't it, Tico?"

The dog woofed again; then, as if he had understood everything that had been said, dropped to a place at her side.

"So now we are four," Johnny thought to himself as, rising from his place he took up the axe and went out into the night to gather a fresh supply of fuel.

When he returned Gordon Duncan was still fast asleep. Sitting quite close to the girl, the Corporal was talking in low tones. As Johnny took his place he caught the word cabin. A little later a boat was spoken of, then timber and a broad tundra.

Taking the stub of a pencil and a sheet of paper from his pocket, the officer drew what was likely to be a rough map.

Johnny understood in a general way what was happening. The Corporal realized that he had, without intending to do so, stirred up in Gordon Duncan's breast a fire not easily quenched. He had so worked upon his almost exaggerated sense of duty that he would be driven to attempt the seemingly impossible. Without adding fuel to the flames by giving the old man a detailed description of the route

to be taken, he was imparting that knowledge to Faye Duncan.

"Well thought out and mighty decent of him," was Johnny's mental comment. With that thought uppermost in his mind, he went about the business of preparing for a night's repose.

CHAPTER VII

A LOOK BEYOND

The Corporal was up and away before dawn. Having assisted him with his dogs, Johnny returned to the cabin.

In his sleeping bag on a rude bunk in the corner Gordon Duncan still slept. Before the fire sat Faye Duncan. She had thrown fresh fuel on the fire. The flames were leaping up the chimney.

"I suppose you know," she said as he took a seat beside her, "that Grandfather will accept this new mission."

"I had supposed he would."

"He doesn't want to. The finding of his long lost partner and the green gold has obsessed him for years. It is natural that he should want to go on. But he is deeply religious and,

what is better, has a great heart. There are those who suffer. It is possible for him to give them aid. Duty calls. He must go."

"But only three of us!" said Johnny. "How can we help? We may starve, ourselves. In their ignorance, superstition and great need they may attack us."

"We have eight bows between us," the girl said quietly. "A bow weighs very little. We always carried a good supply. Never as many as now. Providence must have directed us. We have many arrow points. Thongs, feathers, material for shafts may be had in the wilderness. A bow is a precious thing. Its wood must be of the best and seasoned many months. We are fortunate in having so many."

"After all, we can use but three bows at a time," Johnny said.

"Grandfather believes that there are old men among the Eskimos who have been archers and have not forgot. If he can arm these with our extra bows, if we can somehow am-

bush the caribou when they come, we may save those starving ones yet."

Johnny looked at her in silence. His mind was in a whirl. Here was an old man and a girl who but a few days before, as if guilty of some crime, were hiding in the brush. Yet, at this moment they were planning a long and dangerous journey far out on the tundra in the hope of saving the lives of a few half savage people.

"Queer folks," he told himself.

"So here we are," the girl went on after a moment's silence. "In an hour we shall be on our way. Before us is the wilderness, after that a river, the land of little sticks and the silent, white tundra. We carry only our precious bows and arrows. It seems a foolhardy and futile undertaking.

"But think!" Her voice became vibrant with emotion. "Unless someone comes to them, men, women and cute little brown babies will starve—starve!"

She cupped her chin in her hands to stare

at the fire. "I don't fear for myself," her tone was deep and solemn. "I only fear for him. He is old, though he has the heart of a boy.

"I hear him stirring," she said softly, springing to her feet. "I must prepare breakfast. He is always impatient of delays."

"Listen," said Johnny. "I promised to go with you. I'll not turn back now. Count me in."

The girl did not speak. She put out a hand. It was a good, strong, capable hand. Johnny gripped it heartily. And there in the dawn was sealed a compact that was to live through many a long day of wild adventure.

Noon of that day found the little party looking down upon a scene of surpassing beauty. This was one of those days of crystal-like clearness. From the promontory on which they now stood, the crest of the range, their vision stretched mile on mile, seeming never to end.

Spreading out a roughly drawn map, Gordon Duncan traced for Johnny the course they

were to take. He had gotten it from Faye, who in turn had it from the Corporal. Here, down the ridge, they followed the blazed trail. There, where a huge black tamarack tree stood, they bent to the right. A short way farther, and they came to the boiling and tumultuous stream again. Following this as best they might over rock pile and ledge, through dense forest and thicket, they would come at last to a broad, tree covered valley.

"At the entrance to that valley," the old man ended, carefully refolding his map, "unless we have gone wrong, we will find a rude shelter and close beside it an Indian dugout canoe. The canoe was left there six months ago, but the Corporal thinks it is still in condition."

"Here's hoping," said Johnny. "For if it is not, our journey ends there."

"And with its ending the fate of many human lives is sealed," said Gordon Duncan solemnly. "It is strange that so much should depend upon so little. But we must do our

part. We are enlisted in a great cause, the welfare of a vanishing race."

As Johnny stood there looking away to the north, where even now it seemed he caught the gleam of a snow blanket, strange thoughts passed through his mind.

In a spirit almost of bravado, he had one morning slung his quiver of arrows over his back, bound his pack together, seized his bow and walked away into the wilderness.

"I meant to be away a month," he told himself. "I would remain in the wilderness a month and receive no support save that which came from my bow and arrow. Well," his face twisted into a doubtful smile, "it will be a month right enough, probably two, perhaps three. And the bow and arrow must support us, not one but three. There is no other way."

"Two months! Perhaps three!" He said the words out loud. "Why, they'll think me dead! I must go back. It isn't treating them right. I must go back!" He was thinking of his own people.

"And yet—" As he closed his eyes to think he saw a group of little brown people, many groups, seated round the fast vanishing lights of crude tallow lamps. He saw the wan faces of mothers, the eyes of children that gleamed the bright gleam of death by starvation.

"One must always think of the highest good of the greatest number." He quoted the words of a great teacher.

"Are we ready?" said Gordon Duncan.

"We are ready," said Johnny. "Lead on."

Once more they marched on.

Two days later the girl and boy stood upon the crest of a high hill. Gordon Duncan was back some distance on the trail. Johnny would have gone back for his pack. But the aged Scotchman was still proud of his strength. This was the last climb for the day. Their camping place for the night was at the foot of the hill just before them.

Here there were no trees, only rocks. Their view was not obstructed. Far away behind hills that had turned to pure gold and moun-

tains that appeared to smoke with the snow driven far and wide by the wind of their summits, the sun was setting. Far below was the river, a golden ribbon winding across a field of white satin.

So they stood there, the boy and the girl. Life, beautiful, glorious life, surged through their beings. It was inconceivable that anyone in all the world could be starving at this moment.

Spring was in the making. They did not see it. The willows by the river were not budding. The snow of the trail was hard as the rocks on which they now stood; yet spring was coming. They could feel it in their blood.

Youth, spring, life. The night before they had stood for a moment beneath the starry heavens wondering what life could exist in those great distances beyond.

"Whatever it may be," Johnny told himself, "it could not be more wonderful than life here and now."

Life! The great cities with their noise and dirt, with their artificiality, their fraud and sham, were far away. The girl that stood at his side was real. From toes to fingertips, she was genuine. Her mackinaw was faded, her knickers frayed in spots, but the color in her cheeks, the smile on her lips, the glint of pure joy in her eye, were real.

"Real!"

He said the word aloud. She heard and understood.

It was well for them that they enjoyed this perfect moment together, for the days that were to come were such as require strong and beautiful memories to lessen their pain.

Gordon Duncan came toiling up the hill. Seeing the halo of sunset glory that had been cast about them, he said;

"It is truly wonderful. Who could believe that less than two hundred miles from this spot men, women and little children may be starving? There are men who will tell you that nature is God. A cruel God indeed who

could furnish us such beauty and offer to them only death."

The sun sank from sight. Darkness and a sudden chill overtook them. Turning, they marched down the hill in silence.

Several nights later, with only a shelter of poles covered by boughs, Johnny slept again in his blankets before the fire. His was the sleep of one whose burdens are heavy, whose trails have been long, but whose heart is light.

"The canoe is fit," was the last word of Gordon Duncan before they went to rest. "Fit as a fiddle. To-morrow the river takes us on the way."

"But remember," said his granddaughter, "that there are rapids in the river."

"There are never rapids in any life till we reach them," said the rugged old Scot. "And when we do reach them we can but do our part. God will see that all is for the best."

CHAPTER VIII

A HAVEN OF REFUGE

"It is going to storm." The old Scot dropped his paddle to the bottom of the dugout long enough to turn up the collar of his jacket, then he took up the mechanical swing of his brawny arms that had done so much in the days that had just passed to speed the three adventurers on into the Northland.

"Going to be a bad one!" Johnny threw a fleeting glance at the girl before him. Like her grandfather, she performed wonders. She had kept up the steady, monotonous swing of paddle until Johnny thought she must be working in her sleep. The muscles of her arms had grown hard as a man's.

They had found the Corporal's cottonwood dugout a good one. For three days it had carried them straight on into the great unknown.

"After all, she's only a girl," he told himself, thinking once more of the girl. "This storm will be a bad one. Wish we'd come to shelter. The map shows a cabin or something down here somewhere. Be easy enough to pass it in the storm. Map don't show which bank. Wish—"

Just then the advance guard of the storm struck. A rattling drive of cutting snow, a sudden gust that set their canoe on side, and it was gone.

"But there will be other blasts and worse ones," he told himself.

In this he was right. A half hour had not passed before they were shooting along through a veritable wall of driving white. One of those sudden and terrible storms that haunt the Arctic had come driving down from the North.

"Have to go ashore and try to get up something of a camp," said the old Scot, as with the greatest difficulty he unbent his benumbed

fingers. "Can't stand this. Cold and damp will get us. Wind off that ice water is terrible."

Once more Johnny looked at the girl. Gripping her paddle, she still swung her arms in rhythmic motion.

"Half froze," he thought, with a tightening of the throat. "She's doing and enduring all for the good of people she has not seen."

Just then there was a stir in the prow of the canoe. Tico, the dog given to Faye by the Corporal, had crept from his snug corner to lift his nose to the air, point toward the farther shore, and let out an unhappy wail.

"Something over there." The girl spoke now for the first time in a half hour. "Maybe game. That's something. Our food supply is very low. Better go over."

Neither the old Scot nor Johnny questioned her judgment. Turning the canoe half about, they struck for that distant shore.

It was a perilous journey. The moment they left the sheltering bank, waves began crashing over the gunwale.

The boat was half filled when the girl, dropping her paddle, began to bale. The men toiled unremittingly at the oars.

"Wind's with us. Be there soon," Johnny said cheeringly.

"Wa-roo!" answered the dog. Standing high in the prow, he appeared to direct their course.

They were still half a boat length from shore when with a mighty leap the dog, clearing the boat, landed on the ice that edged the water and at once shot away into the forest.

"Tico! Tico!" the girl cried. "Come back! Come back!"

Wind and water drowned her cries. The dog did not return.

"All we can do is to follow him," said Johnny as he made the boat fast to a bough that hung far out over ice and water, then tested the ice with an axe.

"Here, let me have those," he said as Gordon Duncan was about to throw his bundle of bows and arrows ashore.

"Guess you better carry them," said Gordon

Duncan. "Can't be too careful of your artillery in such a land."

After a dangerous slide or two they were on land.

Following the dog's steps in the snow, Johnny led the way into the tangled brush. To his great joy he found indications of a rough trail.

"May have been made by moose or caribou, for all that," he told himself.

"What was that?" the girl exclaimed suddenly, stopping short.

From behind them had come a cracking sound.

Dropping the bundle of arrows he carried, Johnny sprang back over the trail.

"It's gone!" There was a touch of despair in his voice as he called to his companions. "The boat's gone! The branch tore away."

Never in his life had he felt more miserable. No food, no blankets, no shelter in a strange land, hundreds of miles from known human habitation, with a blizzard tearing at them.

"And it's all my fault," he said. "It was I who tied the boat. I should have tested the moorings."

"No," said Gordon Duncan. There was force and dignity in his tone. "It is not entirely your fault. We were there to offer counsel. And this is not the end. It is but the beginning. We have bows and arrows. There is game here as elsewhere. There is always a way to prepare a shelter and make a fire."

"But first we must find Tico," said the girl, who had just come up to them. "I can't imagine what madness has seized him."

"Dogs," said Gordon Duncan, "are sometimes wiser than humans. There may be something in his actions that is worth investigating. Let us be going."

In this he was more right than he knew.

They had not gone a hundred yards when the trail widened. Another hundred yards, and a dark bulk loomed through the whirling snow.

"A cabin or a boulder," said Johnny a little breathlessly.

"Either will prove a boon," said the old Scot. "A shelter in the time of storm."

"A cabin! A cabin!" the girl cried joyously as the dog came bounding back to meet her.

And such a cabin as it proved to be! Built of massive logs, with a door that required the strength of two to swing it wide, what a haven! It was equipped with rude bunks, a hand hewn table and chairs and a massive stone fireplace.

"This," said Gordon Duncan, a note of deep, silent joy creeping into his voice, "is the very place we were to leave the canoe and strike away across the tundra. Truly we have been guided by a great good God."

"God, and Tico," whispered the girl as she sank down upon a chair. There was no suggestion of irreverence in her tone.

"Aye, and the dog," said the old Scot. "I doubt not that many times the great Creator finds a dog's course more easy to direct than that of a human."

A hasty survey of the cabin revealed many

delightful surprises. Built, no doubt, by some trader and trapper of bygone days, it had been fashioned to shut out the rigor of winter and the tearing rush of wild northern gales. It had been equipped with massive iron cooking utensiles which were still serviceable. It had, beyond doubt, been used by the Mounted Police as a temporary station, for, hidden away among the rafters were blankets, a coffee pot, a small quantity of flour and baking powder, a can of coffee, a sack of beans and a square of bacon.

"Man! Did I not tell you?" exclaimed the joyous Scot. "'Twas God's hand that led us. 'Tis a royal feast we'll have.

"No better fritters were ever made than those moulded by the hands of the bonny lassie here. Bacon, fritters, coffee beside a fire that laughs up a generous chimney. Who could ask for more?"

Johnny joined with the old Scot in his rejoicing. He had not, however, forgotten that their boat was irretrievably lost and that it was

many, many weary miles back, even to the cabin where they had enjoyed their last real night's sleep.

Being young and strong, possessed of a healthy body and a vigorous mind, he did not trouble about the future for long, but springing out into the storm, began dragging in dry brush and logs.

"Ah, now the storm may laugh and the wind crack her cheeks!" exclaimed the Scot as he attacked the branches with an axe he had found in the corner.

Bacon, fritters and coffee might seem a meager feast. But to those who had lived for days on caribou steak, rabbits, partridge and squirrel, it was indeed a rich repast. Even Tico enjoyed it beyond his power to express.

When at last the feast was over and the heavy pots and pans hung in their places Johnny piled three great spruce logs in the center of the fireplace, thrust dry branches and wind wrecked splintered fragments in the niches between, then with his friends sat down

to watch with dreamy eyes the leaping, laughing, roaring flames.

The old Scot was soon nodding in his chair. Lower and lower his head sank upon his breast until only the tangled gray of hair and beard were visible.

Softly, on tiptoe, the girl went to bend over his chair. As she tiptoed back to her place beside the boy, she whispered:

"Sleeping."

Johnny nodded.

For a long time, save for the roar of the wind outside answered by the crackle of the fire within, there was silence. But who can say what communion may be had between hearts loyal and true in moments of silence?

When the girl spoke her tone was deep and low. "I am afraid for him. His heart," she said, glancing toward the sleeping patriarch, "Some day—"

She did not finish, but once more sat staring at the fire.

"This," she said at last, "is to be his one

great adventure. He has the heart of youth, of a knight, a Crusader. We have always lived quietly on our farm, except for these trips into the forest. Always since he was a boy, he has told me, he has longed for an opportunity to render a great service. He believes this is his great opportunity, his crowded hour, this and his final search for old Timmie and his green gold. What a triumph it will be if he accomplishes all!" Again she stared at the fire.

Johnny nodded. He understood.

"We will do all we can to help him realize his highest hope," he said huskily.

A moment later, as the wind shook the cabin, the girl's mood changed. She found herself longing for the home of many simple comforts she had left to follow her grandfather on this strange and uncertain quest.

"You have never seen our home," she said dreamily. "It's not a palace, but it's home. Just a cottage with vines climbing up the front and with fine old fashioned roses, yellow, pink and red, on either side. There's a cozy little

parlor with a reed organ in one corner. Grandfather loves to sing to it on a Sunday afternoon, those old, old fashioned tunes that are so quaint and so—so sort of wonderful. You should hear him boom them out.

“My room,” she went on as if speaking to herself, “looks out upon a field of red clover at the side, and at the back is a clump of forest. The squirrels are so tame that they come to perch on my window sill and beg for sweets and nuts.”

As she ceased speaking Johnny looked at her and realized as never before that she was, despite her rugged face and splendid untiring muscles, only a girl very far from the nest that she called home.

“But,” she exclaimed suddenly as if waking from a dream, “we must not turn back! We must go on! Go on for him!” She nodded toward the sleeping grandfather. “And for the little brown people who, but for us, may starve.”

Three days the storm raged on. Restful days

these were, but not idle ones. Some of their arrows had gone downstream with their ill-fated cottonwood boat. Fortunately they found within the cabin two steel sled runners and a home-made feather duster. The dusters were made of wild goose feathers. No better for arrows can be found. With the aid of fire and such tools as were at hand, they succeeded in cutting the sled runners into bits and fashioning them into arrow heads. Dry fir furnished them shafts for the arrows. Long hours, working side by side over the table, the boy and girl, directed by the old man, worked at the task of making arrows. Cutting, scraping, shaping, pounding, forging, binding, with grimy hands but gleaming eyes they worked on and on until when the storm broke and the sun came out they found themselves better armed than ever before.

“So we may say the storm was a blessing in disguise,” said Gordon Duncan. “To-morrow we must be on our way,” he said as he gazed upon the fading tints of their first red sunset

in the wilderness. "We must hurry. The caribou may come and pass to their northern feeding grounds before us. Then indeed our little brown friends will starve."

"And we with them," Johnny wanted to add, but did not.

That night, by the light of the fire, Johnny spent a full hour studying three maps he had spread out on the table. More than once a sudden exclamation escaped his lips. At last he rose and began pacing the floor. The old Scot was asleep in his chair. Faye Duncan had watched Johnny with keen interest. Now as she caught the light of a quizzical smile playing across his face, she said,

"What is it?"

"Why look!" he replied, leading her to the table. "See, here are three maps, the one done on white leather by your grandfather so many years ago, the roughly drawn one by the Corporal to guide us on this trip, and an old general map of the country which I found here in the cabin.

"It's strange," he said, straightening up, "but when you trace the two routes out, the one your grandfather proposed to follow in his search for that more or less mythical partner of his—"

"Don't say that!" Her finger touched his lips. "It's all very real to him."

"Well, anyway, we are now across the river, and if we follow the route the Corporal has marked out for us we will be going almost directly toward the spot your grandfather has marked for Timmie's cabin.

"So," he said, reading the surprise and joy in her eye, "the longest way round is the shortest way home, after all! See!" He pointed to a spot on the map. "See. There is the camp of the Eskimo. And here, just a short way across the tundra, then over these low mountains, is Timmie's cabin and the—the green gold."

"So in choosing to be of service to the natives, Grandfather was really serving himself," the girl said as they returned to their

places before the fire. "How often life is like that."

"Green gold." She repeated the words thoughtfully after a time. "Do you suppose there is any such thing?"

"Yes, of course there is," said Johnny. "They use it for making jewelry, rings, watch-cases and the like. But where it comes from I haven't the least notion."

"Is—is it very valuable?"

"Why yes, it must be."

"And if there was a lot of it, a mine or something, and Grandfather has a share, we would be—might be—"

"Quite rich."

"Oh!" Her eyes shone.

"You know," she said after some time, "we are quite poor and we—Grandfather might need money badly to—to defend—"

Johnny waited long for the rest of that sentence. It never came.

"Well," he said at last, "to-morrow it's the long, long trail once more."

CHAPTER IX

A MOVING ISLAND

"They're coming!"

Johnny Thompson thought he heard the beating of Faye Duncan's heart as she whispered these words in his ears.

They lay close together on the snow against a little rise of land. From this place they could see nothing before them. A faint crackling sound was all that told them that a moving island of brown, a great herd of caribou, was moving up the narrow valley and would, within the space of a quarter of an hour, be abreast of them and within easy bow shot.

Their position was not without its element of danger. Johnny's heart missed a beat at the thought. The caribou, when they had last seen them, were moving with the steady

precision of an army. There were thousands of them.

"But if a mother wolf and her pack appears to the right of them, then what?" Johnny asked himself. He knew how broad and sharp were the hoofs of the caribou. It was these very hoofs that made the steady click and crash as of a thousand batons beating on wooden rails. Visions of that vast herd stampeding and rushing down upon them like a relentless sea passed before his mind's eye.

"Perhaps we shouldn't have come," he whispered.

"It was our only chance," the girl whispered back. "Our chance for the Eskimos and for ourselves."

In this she appeared to speak the truth. Johnny lapsed into silence.

Four days had passed since on that bright morning they had left the abandoned trapper's cabin.

Borrowing blankets and a little food from the cabin, they had started out.

The going had been heavy from the start. The forest had disappeared almost at once. Guided by the dog Tico, they had found themselves following a northerly course over a flat and trackless tundra.

Day after day they had tramped on. For a time there had been plenty of game, ptarmigan on little ridges, rabbits in the bottoms.

As they advanced these had disappeared. And now for an entire twenty-four hours they had eaten nothing.

An hour before they had mounted a narrow rise of land to find themselves gazing upon a curious sight. A broad brown island, long and narrow and weaving in and out, had been moving toward them.

"The caribou! We are too late!" The excitement had been too much for Gordon Duncan. Seized by a sudden heart attack, he had fallen upon the snow. All he could do as his stout hearted companions assured him that all was not lost was to lie flat upon his blankets and struggle painfully for breath.

"We will take our bows and arrows and hide in one of the little runs," Johnny had explained.

"When that throng is passing we surely can pick off a number of caribou. The Eskimo village must not now be far away. We will build a cairn for the meat and can return for it."

Johnny wondered now as the sound of thousands of crackling hoofs grew louder, whether his words would prove true. Was the Eskimo village near? Would they succeed in shooting enough caribou to be of real service? Could the meat be kept away from the wolves?

"At least we shall eat again," he whispered stoutly.

"Yes," the girl whispered back, as with nervous fingers she gripped her bow. She had been loath to leave her grandfather back there alone on the tundra. He had insisted. So here they were. And here, coming closer, ever closer, was the moving island of brown.

"There! There is one!" she whispered as a pair of massive antlers appeared above the ridge's crest.

A splendid young buck, having climbed the ridge, had risen above the snow. There for a moment he stood, head high, sniffing the air. That moment was his last, for with the speed and precision that would have done credit to a daughter of William Tell, the stout hearted Scotch girl sent an arrow unerring to its mark.

The next instant Johnny and Faye were on their feet making the most of their opportunity.

That the opportunity was poor enough they were soon to learn. Like a mighty stream that breaks its bonds to race over land, this mass of brown flowed away before their very eyes.

A dozen arrows shot, half of them lost forever, and only two caribou to show for it all. This was their score.

"Well," said the girl, dropping to the snow, weak with excitement, "as you said before, we will eat to-night. As for the Eskimos, there must be some other way."

"Yes," said Johnny, "there must be some—

some other way." He seemed suddenly to have grown very weak and old.

"We-l-l, it's not so bad." It was the voice of an old man grown suddenly strong that sounded in Johnny's ear. A moment more and Gordon Duncan, with Tico hitched to an improvised sled, stood beside them.

"As for yonder little brown people, God will provide in his own good way," he said as he led them down the ridge.

That night between the sheltering banks of a narrow gorge, they built a shanty of willow bushes. The beds they slept on after a royal feast of roasted caribou steak were made of rustling willow leaves.

Next morning, after cutting a draw line from a caribou skin, Johnny piled all the remaining meat on the sled, and putting his own shoulder to the harness, bade Tico lead on.

It was hard, grinding toil, but he hung to the task until, after climbing a slight elevation, Faye let out a cry of joy. Before them in the

valley, pitched in an irregular circle, were a half dozen skin tents.

"The Caribou Eskimos." The words that came from the old Scot's lips spoke volumes of joy. What did it matter now that the way had been long and hard, that they had faced death by water, storm and cold? What did he care that they had but two caribou on their sled and that the great caribou band had passed northward? They had found the people they had come to serve. God would find a way to perfect their labors.

"But where are the people?" Faye asked.

Where indeed? Not a living creature was stirring about the tents. Not a film of smoke curled up from the tent poles.

"It's like a village of the dead," Johnny said in an awed whisper. In this he was more nearly right than he knew.

"Gone hunting," said Gordon Duncan. His words carried no conviction.

"Come on. Let's hurry," said the girl, springing forward.

Once more Johnny put his shoulder to the sled. Gordon Duncan and Faye also seized the strap and together they went racing away down the slight incline that led to the village.

No sadder sight had this trio known than that which met their eyes as they peered within the first low, circular tent. Sprawled upon deer skins, sitting bent over as in a stupor, or lying prone like dead men, nine Eskimos greeted their entrance with not so much as a mumbled word or a stare.

"Dead," was Johnny's mental comment as he felt the girl's impulsive grip on his arm.

"No," he said aloud, "they're not dead; only in a stupor from lack of food."

"Hello!" he shouted.

"Hello!" came back in a hollow tone as if from a tomb. One of the squatting figures attempted to rise. His knees doubled up under him and he rolled upon the deerskins.

"Food!" Johnny said. "We have caribou meat."

It seemed certain that but one of the Eski-

mos understood, the man who had made a futile attempt to rise.

"There is no caribou meat here," he mumbled hoarsely.

"We have caribou meat for you, a sled load."

Rolling himself into a half sitting position, the English speaking Eskimo said a few words in his own tongue.

The effect was electrical. It was as if a strong current had been sent through the motionless bodies that lay about on the deer-skins. With one accord they began creeping, crawling, tumbling toward the entrance to the tent.

For this Johnny was prepared. Quickly un-lashing the sled, he produced a quantity of roasted meat. This he cut into little squares and handed to the Eskimos.

They ate like famished wolves. Yet, in this extremity they did not forget their fellow villagers. When each had eaten a little they waved their hands toward the other tents.

Fortunately the remaining tents were not

so crowded as this one. Sad to relate, two of the occupants were beyond human aid.

When night fell upon the white sweep of the tundra and the three rescue workers, worn out by the day's excitement and labor, sought the little tent and the pile of deerskins that had been surrendered to their use, the dead had been carried to their last resting place and the living had been made as comfortable as possible. Then it was that they took stock of supplies and cast about for signs of the future.

"Looks rather hopeless," Johnny said as he sank down upon the deerskins. "Food we have can't do more than revive them. What next?"

As if in answer to his question, the English speaking Eskimo came creeping into the tent.

"Have you cartridges?"

"No cartridges," said Gordon Duncan.

The man's face fell. "White man," he mumbled, "no got cartridges. No cartridge."

"Listen!" said Gordon Duncan, with eyes alight. "Before the white man came, how did your people live?"

"Caribou meat. Plenty caribou."

"How did they kill them?"

"Bow and arrow."

"Where are your bows and arrows now?"

The man shrugged, then went through the motion of breaking something over his knees. "No good, bows and arrows. Rifles better, think mine. Think that every Eskimo."

"What could you do now if you had cartridges for your rifle?" Duncan asked.

"Get caribou." The Eskimo's eyes were alight with hope.

"But they have gone far north."

"Some caribou. Not all caribou. Come more soon."

"What?" Gordon Duncan was on his feet.

"Yes. Come more. Not tell lie, mine. Come more. Mebby to-morrow. Mebby next day. Can't tell. Come, that's all."

"Then, see here!" Gordon Duncan unbound his bundle of bows. "They'll all shoot true and strong," he said. "Just give me the right

man to draw them. There are old men among you?"

"Three," said the Eskimo. "Kit-me-suk, Teragloona, Omnakok."

"Send for the wisest of them all."

The man was brought in. There followed two hours of talking, relating, explaining, planning. Through the young interpreter the aged Eskimo related adventures of long ago, tales of mighty caribou hunts he had known before the white man came with his firearms.

Gordon Duncan in his turn outlined a hunt for the caribou that were yet to come, which, if his dream came true, was to be the mightiest hunt of all time.

In the end, with their splendid imaginations on fire, the old man and the young interpreter returned to their people to inspire them in turn with high hope and with dreams of wild adventure.

A long time that night Johnny lay awake among his deerskins. There were thoughts enough to keep him awake. A whole tribe of

little brown people now were dependent upon the skill and prowess of Gordon Duncan in organizing a hunt. Most of the actual execution must fall upon Johnny's young shoulders, for Gordon Duncan was old. Little wonder, then, that he did not sleep.

"We are trusting all to this one grand endeavor," he told himself. "Little of our caribou meat is left. If the next drove does not pass this way, if we fail in the hunt, then we too must starve." He thought of Faye Duncan and her aged grandsire and wished they had not chosen to come.

"We must succeed," he told himself. "We must! MUST!"

The plan they were to follow, the ancient plan used by the Eskimos, was not a complicated one. Yet it required skill and prowess. As the drove came in from the rolling hills to the south they were to be directed by native drivers on a course that would take them across a narrow, shallow stretch of water that lay between two lakes.

As they neared this narrow stretch of water the caribou would find themselves cut off by native drivers and imaginary natives built of stone piles and deerskins. They would then take to a deeper, broader stretch of water which would force them to swim. At the far bank, in ambush the hunters would wait with drawn bows.

"If we succeed," Johnny thought. "If we do." He had visions of a long journey over hard packed snow with meat aplenty on Tico's sled, and after that a long, long rest in a cabin somewhere on at the back of beyond.

"And after that?" He thought of Timmie, the old man's one time pal, and his green gold. The season would not be over until that mystery was solved or abandoned forever.

"If we succeed?" he thought again. He remembered the fear that Gordon Duncan and Faye had shown on meeting white men. Would they return to that cottage that Faye called home? Who could tell?

CHAPTER X

TREACHERY IN THE NIGHT

"I hear them! They are coming! Oh, Grandfather! Johnny Thompson! They are coming! The caribou are coming!"

As on that other occasion, the girl's words were uttered in a low whisper, yet so tense were her feelings that her whispered words left in Johnny Thompson's mind the impression of a sharp, shrill cry.

At once the boy's mind was in a whirl. Had she heard them? Were they truly coming? Faye Duncan's ears were keen as a fox's. Her imagination also was keen. Had imagination deceived her? He had heard nothing.

"If they are coming, they may not pass this way." This he whispered to the girl. "We must not hope too much."

"No, we must not," she answered quietly. "But I did hear it distinctly, the crack-crack of their hoofs! The wind brought in the sound. It's died down now. I can hear it no longer. But," she whispered tensely, "they must come! They must!"

To this Johnny agreed. Three days had passed since they arrived at the Eskimo camp. In that time, enheartened and strengthened by the white man's caribou meat, the Eskimo had killed with bow and arrow five rabbits, three foxes and eight ptarmigan. But what were these among so many? The caribou meat was gone. Rabbit, fox, ptarmigan, all were gone, and starvation stared both Eskimos and whites in the face.

As the caribou had delayed their coming, there had been grumbling among the Eskimos. An aged witch doctor had said that the presence of the white men in the village had offended the spirits of all dead caribou and that they had told the living caribou to go north over some other route.

"We shall all starve," the Eskimo had said, shaking with fear of the future.

"If only they were not such children!" the old Scot had said to Johnny. "If they had more courage and determination they might live a long time on small game. But, having become accustomed to living upon game taken by the rifle, they see only death ahead when no ammunition is to be had."

In the midst of all this waiting and doubting an Eskimo had come running in from a long hunt in the distant hills. He had seen a band of caribou. They were coming.

"How many?" Johnny had asked eagerly.

"Desra! Desra!" (plenty! plenty!) The man had spread his arms wide.

At once all was noise and confusion. It had been with the greatest difficulty that Gordon Duncan had silenced their noisy chatter and had organized the hunt that was to mean life or death to the whole band.

Women and children were sent away into the hills. One band of men was stationed at

the right of the lakes. These were to rush in at the proper time and urge the caribou on. A second group was concealed in a clump of willows close to the narrow neck of water which the caribou would expect to cross. These, at the proper time, would turn them to another course and force them to a swimming passage.

Carefully concealed in a second clump of willows on the opposite bank were the true hunters. Seven Eskimos, the older men who retained some skill with bow and arrow, were here. So too were the three whites.

"It's not going to be easy," Johnny told himself, "especially for the girl. We will be wading deep in stinging water. And these natives have been able to provide us with no waterproof skin garments for our protection. The sea Eskimos could have given us hip boots of sealskin."

With this thought he was led to wonder that a people who had dwelt for so long a time

upon the border of the sea should have come inland to live.

"It's not so strange, after all," he told himself. "It is so in other lands. In Borneo there are the sea dwellers and the mountain tribes. In Siberia are the Reindeer Chukchees and the Sea Hunting Chukchees. It seems—"

His thoughts were broken off by a sharp whispered,

"There! There! Don't you hear them?"

Johnny listened and, as he held his breath, above the dry rustle of dead willow leaves, he did catch the unmistakable crash and rattle of an oncoming army of caribou.

"God grant that they may not turn back!" said Gordon Duncan as he whispered a fervent prayer to his God that He might prove that day that He, the great Father, and not the spirit of some dead animal, directed the flight of wild birds and the courses of the herds of all wild creatures.

Johnny thought again of the chilling water

where a film of thin ice was forming, and shuddered.

Knowing that their wait might be long, he had spent much time in preparing a comfortable place of concealment. He had cut armfuls of slender willow shoots to which the dry leaves still clung. From these he had made a soft cushioned resting place. About this he had built a tight wall of leafed branches. This wall kept out the wind. Here, huddled close together, they were comfortable indeed. Compared to this, the very thought of the sweeping north wind and the cold black water sent a chill to his very marrow.

"Perhaps," he whispered hesitatingly, "perhaps it might be that you'd do well to stay here." He was speaking to the girl.

"Stay here?" The girl's tone showed surprise.

"It—it's going to be hard out there, and—and a bit dangerous. There are enough native hunters. We have supplied them with weapons."

"I—" The girl hesitated. There can be no doubt but that there was an angry retort upon her lips. She, after all, was but human, and the moments that had just passed had been tense ones.

One look at Johnny's honest, earnest face, and the remark died unuttered.

"I would not be worthy of my Scotch ancestry," she said after a moment of silence, "nor of my grandfather, if I did not go when the call comes."

After that, for a long time, as the click of hoofs and clash of antlers grew louder, there was silence in the place of hiding. As the girl sat half hidden by willow branches the dry leaves rustled to the time of her wildly beating heart.

"There!" Johnny whispered at last. "There! They have taken to the water. Now is the time."

Creeping through the bushes until they were at the brink of the water, they plunged silently in.

"Good!" Johnny exclaimed hoarsely, "The Eskimos are doing their part nobly."

It was true. A thin line of hunters, hip deep in the water, stood awaiting the great drove of caribou who had come too far to turn back.

A half minute more, and an arrow sped; another and yet another. Came a great splashing and thrashing of waters. In his dying frenzy a caribou beat an Eskimo into the freezing water. The Eskimo, bow in hand, was up in an instant and drawing to shoot again.

So went the battle. Drenched to the skin by water thrown upon him by the rushing herd, the vanguard of which had even now reached the bank, the old Scot stood his ground and drew such a bow as never in his life had he drawn before, while back to back with him the girl did her part.

Ten minutes of nerve wrecking strain, and all was over. Not, however, until food for many a long moon was supplied for every member of the strange little band.

"We-e-l-l," said the old Scot as a half hour later, dressed in dry fur garments, loaned him by an Eskimo, he sat beside a willow bush fire, "with God's help we won. And our God must be thanked."

At that he dropped upon his knees and offered up a prayer of thanks to the God who provides all that is good. The Eskimos saw and marveled, though perhaps not one of them all understood. To this remote tribe no missionary had ever come.

It was during the feast following the hunt that a surprising and disturbing drama was played out before the great roasting fire of the tribe.

A hammer of perfectly good American make lay upon the ground at Johnny's feet. He sat munching a delicious bit of broiled steak and wondering how that hammer had come all the way to these barren lands, what dog team or boat had brought it, how many fox skins it had cost the Eskimo owner, and what use it had ever been put to in a land where there are

neither boards nor nails, when of a sudden he conceived of an immediate use for it. A young Eskimo was attempting to obtain the juicy marrow from the bones of a roast leg of caribou. He was pounding the bone with a round stone. The stone slipped from his grip. The bone did not break. Again he tried without success.

"Here, let me have it." Seizing the bone, Johnny laid it upon a flat rock and crushed it with a single blow of the hammer.

But what was this? As Johnny glanced about him, he found a dark frown upon the face of every Eskimo. As he offered the broken bone with its rich marrow exposed to the Eskimo boy, who a moment before had appeared so eager to possess it, he was met with a sudden;

"No me! No me!" Then the boy turned and walked away.

It was strange. Johnny could not fathom the mystery of the tribe's actions. From that very moment they stood aloof. The joyous

noise and chatter of feasting was at an end. They gathered in little groups, to speak to one another in mumbled gutturals. Soon they went to their tents, leaving only the three whites by the dying embers of the feast fire.

"What did I do?" Johnny asked. "Crushed a bone with a hammer, tried to do the boy a kindness, that was all."

"You may never know," the old Scot's tone was low and serious. "We'd better be getting away. Morning will do. We'll sleep. Then we'll go."

"It's a queer way to treat us," Johnny grumbled. "Here we have saved their lives, helped them secure food to tide them over, and at once they turn their backs upon us."

"You must not judge them," said Duncan slowly. "Let God do that. They are but children. To them every living creature and every dead one too has a spirit. If you offend the spirit of a dead caribou or a musk-ox or wolf, he may do you great harm. There are a hundred things you must do and a hundred others

you must not do. You who have lived all your life in the light of civilization know little enough of the torment that comes from being a heathen. But we must sleep if we are to travel to-morrow."

Faye Duncan realized the truth of these last words quite as well as her grandfather did. Yet, for some reason, as she lay among the deerskins with her grandfather breathing in peaceful slumber nearby, she found herself unable to sleep. The day had been an exciting and trying one. The great crisis, in so far as the Eskimos' needs were concerned, had been reached and passed.

She was about to fall asleep when she thought again of Johnny's strange experience with the young Eskimo and the hammer.

At that very moment she caught a slight sound outside the tent. The sound, coming as it did in the silence of the night, was disturbing. Parting the tent flaps, she looked out. The next moment she barely suppressed a scream. The tent in which Johnny slept was

not ten feet from their own. Moonlight made all bright as day. At that very moment an Eskimo with a long knife in his hand was lifting the skins at the back of Johnny's tent. As he turned half about the girl recognized the young Eskimo of the evening, he who had refused to accept the marrow bone crushed by Johnny's hammer.

CHAPTER XI

THE DANCING SHADOW

The tent Johnny slept in was a small one. He slept in it alone. There could be no mistaking the intent of the Eskimo with the long knife.

"He will kill Johnny," the girl told herself, gripping at her heart.

Her first impulse was to cry out. The cry was stifled by the thought that the whole village would be awakened.

"They might all turn upon us. Then what chance have we?"

All this flashed through the girl's mind. The next instant she shot silently out of the tent. Her bare feet left tracks in the snow but made no sound.

Just as the Eskimo was creeping into

Johnny's tent, he felt himself seized from behind and dragged violently backward. The next instant a heavy body came crashing down upon him. The knife flew from his hand. His breath was knocked from him. He uttered one low grunt and that was all.

Thirty seconds later, powerful hands gripped his shoulders while in a hoarse whisper a voice spoke.

"What was he doing?" It was the old Scot.

"Try—trying—" The girl struggled hard to retain her composure. "He had a long knife. He was trying to kill Johnny."

For a moment the old Scot sat in silent meditation.

"They are ungrateful beasts!" The girl's low whisper was tense with indignation.

"No, no, girl, you must not think that! They are but children, frightened children. Afraid, that's what they are. Afraid of the trees in the forest, of spirits that do not exist at all, afraid, afraid. You must not blame them."

Lifting the young Eskimo to his feet, he pointed away toward the little village of native tents, then gave him a gentle shove.

"Johnny!" he called in a low tone.

There came no answer.

A new terror gripped the girl's heart. What if, after all, she had been too late?

"Slept through it all!" the old Scot grumbled. "Have to shake him a bit."

He disappeared within the tent. A moment later, to her intense relief, Faye heard the two conversing in low tones.

"We'll pack up," said the grandfather as he emerged from the tent. "Something has gone amiss. Can't tell what. There's no use to stay. Let's get away as soon as we can."

An hour later, with a glorious yellow moon hanging low in the sky to light their way, and with Tico to lead them on, the little party pushed off into the night.

All through the remainder of the night and the greater part of the day they moved forward. A strange spectacle, a dog, an old man,

a young man and a girl moving over an endless expanse of white, doing a forced march to escape from those whom they had come to save. They were following an entirely new course, one which Johnny believed would bring them to their journey's end, Timmie's cabin and green gold.

"Forgive them, child. Forgive them," the old Scot said as he read the look of unhappiness on his granddaughter's face. "Learn to pray the prayer of one much more worthy than we, 'Father, forgive them; they know not what they do.' Some day a missionary will come to them. He will teach them. Then they will understand."

Strange to say, as they traveled away from the tundra toward the forest at the foot of the mountain, a brown spot like a drifting shadow or prowling wolf followed them. When at last they came to the edge of the forest and began making camp, this shadowy figure did not enter the forest, but sought out the shelter of a cut bank of earth, to drop down upon a flat

rock and remain quite motionless for many hours.

Later he wakened and prowled as a wolf would have prowled. He did not come too near the party of three, for all through the long hours, as the girl slept curled up in her blankets, the old man and the young man took turns at making fire and guarding camp.

Toward dawn as Johnny sat half asleep by the fire, the girl, waking from refreshing slumber, sat up blinking at the fire to talk softly of a vine clad cottage where squirrels came to eat from one's hand, where daffodils cast their fragrance to the air in the springtime, and old fashioned roses bloomed in summer.

"I hope I may see you there some day," said Johnny huskily. But as he recalled the way they had come, it seemed very, very far away.

CHAPTER XII

THE GREAT BANSHEE

Next day they marched straight away over the white expanse. A fog, hanging low over the tundra, hid all but a narrow circle from view. They traveled by the compass and the ancient map Johnny had found in the cabin by the river. That it was a long chance the boy admitted to himself. What if the map were wrong? Few maps of this country are accurate.

"Can't turn back now," he told himself. "Have to take a chance. Take a chance." As he repeated the words, to his surprise he found that he was beginning to hate them. All his life, so it seemed as he looked back upon it, he had been taking chances. And what had he gotten out of it? Precious little.

He thought of the cozy cottage the girl had described to him so often. "That's the life,"

he told himself. "And yet they left it for this. They took a chance. And here they are." For the hundredth time he wondered why.

The land became more rolling as they advanced. The tundra was left behind. This the boy took for a good sign. "Coming to the mountains," he told himself. But were they?

As night fell the fog thickened. "Going to be dark as a dungeon," Gordon Duncan mumbled. "Tough luck. No wood for a fire. No place to camp."

What he said was true. For the first time Johnny felt regret for the course they had taken. All about them was rolling ground. Snow blanketed all. Cropping out here and there were bunches of last year's grass, but these poor wisps of wind-shrouded straw would provide neither fire nor bed.

When darkness had fully come, they yielded to the inevitable. Having scooped away the snow as best they could from a narrow patch of turf, they spread out their blankets, sat upon them while they ate a cold and cheerless

supper; then with Tico in their midst, huddling together as best they could, they prepared to defy the damp chill of a late winter night in the Arctic.

It must have been some time past midnight that Johnny, wakened by a low growl from Tico, sat up to peer into the inky darkness and listen.

What he heard caused his blood to run cold. A faint chopping sound drifted in from the dark. Now coming from the right, the left, before him, behind, it seemed all about him at once.

Putting out a hand, he shook the shoulder of Gordon Duncan.

"Listen! Wolves!" he said in a tone that was low and deep.

"What is it?" the girl asked, sitting up.

"Listen! Wolves!" Johnny repeated.

At once, above the chop-chop of the distant enemy, he heard the girl's teeth chatter.

"Get out the bows and arrows," said Gordon Duncan. "If only we had a fire."

"If we only had!" the girl echoed.

"But we'll do for 'em!" the old man declared stoutly.

"Here! There! Stop him!" The girl sprang to her feet.

She was too late. Tico had leaped away into that darkness and fog.

A moment of suspense, then from out that shadow-land came sounds of a terrific encounter.

With a cry of dismay the girl leaped to her feet and would have gone to the aid of her faithful friend. But Gordon Duncan pulled her back.

"No! No! child!" he exclaimed. "It won't do. We must stay together. It's our only chance."

"There are many," he rumbled on. "More than I have ever known before. They do not as a rule travel in packs, these white phantoms of the Arctic. They go about in families. But when caribou are passing they are some-

times thrown together in packs. This is the time when they are most dangerous."

"Listen!" Faye caught her breath as the growl and howl of Tico was blended with the yip-yip of wolves. "They'll kill him. What can we do?" She gripped Johnny's arm until it hurt.

Fortunately this question did not need answering. Fierce as the battle in the dark was, it ended quite suddenly. A moment later the dog came limping back. One shoulder was terribly torn. His strength was completely gone.

Torn and bloody as he was, the girl gathered him in her arms to wrap him in a blanket and lay him down beside her.

"Brave old boy!" she murmured.

For a half hour after that they sat there back to back waiting, listening, staring into the dark, but seeing nothing.

Then a sudden gust of wind sweeping in from the great unknown before them rolled the fog away, to leave them gasping at the size and ferocious appearance of the gray-

white creatures that surrounded them, a grim, silent circle.

As if this were the sign for an advance, the wolves rose each in his place and began a slow advance.

"Now!" said Gordon Duncan. "When I give the word, shoot the one before you, and for the good of all, don't miss. It may mean death."

Poised each on a knee, back to back, they set their bows and nocked their arrows, then waited breathless for the old Scot's whispered command.

To Johnny it seemed that he caught the glint of a gray beast's eye before the whisper came:

"Now!"

Five seconds of suspense for steadied nerves, then Johnny's arrow sped. Before him a gray streak reared in air to fall sprawling and clawing at nothing. The arrow had gone clean through him, then glanced away over the snow.

"What luck for her and for the old man?" he asked himself. There was no time for looking.

In this warfare there was no frightening din. The wolves who had escaped the biting arrows came straight on. A particularly ferocious creature came stealing upon the boy. Now he was ten paces away, now five, now three. A spring and—

Again his bow twanged low. A second arrow found its mark.

But now, before he could turn, before he could as much as realize his danger, a gray streak launched itself upon him.

Down he went. Snapping teeth and tearing claws, and after that a shock. He was beneath a combat, not a part of it. One frenzied effort and he was free.

A glance told him much. The wolf had leaped upon him. Maimed as he was, Tico had come to his aid. The brave dog was down now, the wolf at his throat.

Lacking better weapons, the boy seized the

wolf by the throat and gripped him hard. Trained as they were for every form of combat, the grip of the boy's hands was like steel.

The struggle that followed was a terrific one. Not daring to release his hold, yet fearing every instant that he would be frightfully torn by the beast's claws, Johnny hung on like grim death.

Of a sudden the sight that appeared before him drove him to desperation. As the girl sprang back, a wolf leaped for her throat. They went down together.

Quite forgetting self he released his hold on the first wolf to seize the axe that in the struggle had been thrown from their kit, and with a single blow dispatched the beast that threatened Faye Duncan's life.

And through it all, like the ancient warrior he was, Gordon Duncan remained in his place calmly nocking arrows and sending them crashing into the ribs of his enemies.

"There are more," Johnny panted, helping the girl to her feet.

"More," she panted, "More!"

But what was this? Just when the tide seemed set against them there came a strange roaring sound from the distance. This resembled more than any other the call of a wild beast, a challenge to battle.

Pausing, the gray streaks appeared to listen. Then, one by one, they went trotting away into the night.

Hardly a moment had elapsed before there came a sharp yip of pain, another and yet another. A moment of silence, then the night was made hideous by the noise of battle.

"Wha—what can it be?" The girl's words came in stifled whispers.

"Can't tell," said Johnny.

"Get your bows and arrows," commanded Gordon Duncan. "They may be back upon us at any moment."

"And — and that other monstrous thing!" Faye Duncan's nerves were shattered.

"Five out there." Gordon Duncan's voice

was calm. He was pointing in the direction his arrows had sped.

Johnny was feeling a little ashamed of his record when his eyes fell upon the wolf that had attacked Tico. He was dead, strangled.

"Not so bad," he thought as he once more gripped his bow and sought out an arrow.

There was, as it turned out, no need for further worry. As they sat there shivering, gripping bows with hands benumbed with cold, they listened to the distant tumult rise, then fade away into the night.

"All over," Johnny said at last, rising to ease his stiffened limbs.

"Who—what could it have been?" The girl gripped his hand hard as he assisted her to rise.

"That," said Johnny, "as far as I can tell was the great banshee."

"But look," he said suddenly. "Over there not a quarter of a mile away is a small forest."

What he had said was true. Had they marched but a quarter of a mile farther they

might have slept warm by a roaring fire which would have served to keep the wolves away.

Needless to say, they were not long in packing up and moving to this place of greater safety and comfort.

A half hour later, seated before a fire that fairly blistered their cheeks, the boy and girl, conversing in awed whispers, discussed the strange happenings of the night. In the meantime, rolled in his blankets, and quite as if nothing had happened, Gordon Duncan slept the sleep of the just.

"Heart, did you say?" Johnny nodded toward the sleeping one. "Did you say his heart was bad? Mine was in my throat all the time."

"So was mine. But he—he's different. He—he's a Bruce," the girl whispered back. "His ancestry goes back to the famous Bruce of old Scotland."

CHAPTER XIII

THE ANSWERED CHALLENGE

Had one chanced to have been passing over that vast white expanse over which the three, Johnny, Faye and Gordon Duncan, traveled next day; had his eye caught sight of the dark figure that, ever pressing forward in the fog, continually dogged their footsteps, he must have paused in amazement. A stranger creature could scarcely be imagined.

Stooping low, lurching forward, moving in little jerks, perhaps on four legs, perhaps on two, his form at times seemed grotesquely human. At others it seemed that the impossible had happened, that some huge gorilla from tropical wilds had found his way to this land of ice and snow.

Had curiosity led one to inspect his foot-

prints in the snow, his amazement must have grown. Measuring full twenty inches from toe to heel, they resembled nothing quite so much as the footprints of a fair sized polar bear. Yet as everyone knows, the polar bear lives upon the ice of the ocean. Seldom does he wander more than a dozen miles inland. To look for him here some hundreds of miles inland was to give credence to that which has never been.

This fearsome creature it was that uttered a challenge to the wolves who were rapidly getting the upper hand in the battle with Johnny and his friends.

What was it that had turned them away? Was this challenge but a call telling of the past? Did the memory of other bloody frays spur the wolves on? Or did they see in this lone figure an easy victory and a toothsome feast?

Whatever their hopes, they were soon enough dashed to earth, for hardly had they arrayed themselves in a grinning circle than

one after another of their number began biting, clawing, snapping and yip-yipping in mortal pain. When, in mad desperation they charged, it was no better. Two of their number, being seized by their bushy tails, had their brains speedily dashed out against a rock. A third was thrust through, and a fourth trampled into pulp. Whereupon those few who remained found safety in flight.

After tramping about for some little time in what appeared to be wild fury, the strange and terrible creature had seized five dead wolves by their tails and, turning sharply to the right, climbed the hill.

Before entering the dark fringe of scrub forest, he had paused to stand blinking at the campfire some distance away. Dropping the wolves, he had taken a dozen steps toward the fire. Then, appearing to take other counsel, he had returned to his dead wolves, had given them a vicious kick, had seized them again by the tails, then disappeared into the dark depth of the evergreen thicket.

As for the trio by the fire, they had realized that some strange creature was afoot; but being once more in possession of strong bows and plenty of arrows, with bright flames dispelling the darkness about them, they had felt quite at ease and secure from any manner of sudden attack. How little they really knew of the ways of the wild in this strange wilderness!

Next evening, as they lay before a roaring campfire, chins propped on elbows, watching, dreaming, half asleep, the two of them, the boy and girl, they heard the old man stirring in his sleep. Of a sudden he sat up. By his staring eyes they knew that he spoke as one in a dream.

"I told him the things were copper." His voice was pitched and strained. "But Timmie said 'No, they are green gold.' And he must have been right, for he had worked with a silversmith and had helped make alloys.

"He said they were copper, gold and silver, melted together.

"I said the natives had melted them together.

"He said 'No, they're too ignorant for that. God and nature made the alloy. Somewhere in a great caldron of a volcano, long ago when the earth was new, gold, silver and copper were melted together and poured away in a stream of green gold. And somewhere in the hills there is a placer mine of green gold. We'll find it.'

"Timmie said that, and he's back there behind the hills waiting still, and he knows where the mine is. I've dreamed that many times, and it's true."

Johnny's lips were open for a question, but the girl held up a hand for silence.

"The day has been hard," she whispered. "He is half asleep. Don't excite him."

A moment later the old man had dropped to his place deep among the blankets and save for the crackling of the fire silence lay upon hills and tundra.

CHAPTER XIV

A MYSTERIOUS VISIT IN THE NIGHT

Next morning they opened their eyes to a new world. The fog was gone, the sun shone bright. Up from the south had come a gentle wind that brought with it the breath of spring.

Far away before them, like the jagged teeth of a worn out saw, was a range of mountains. The tops of these mountains still appeared to smoke with the snow swept over the summits.

"I wonder what it's like up there," the girl said to Johnny.

"In time you are sure to know," he said. "Our trail leads over that range. May God grant us a low pass."

"You may well say that." Gordon Duncan's eyes seemed to see things far distant and remote. "But as you say, the trail leads over those mountains. There is no other way."

The week that followed will linger long in the memory of Johnny Longbow and his smiling companion of the trail, for it was spring, and who could forget such an occasion?

In the Arctic winter lingers long. Spring is thrice welcome. This year, creeping up behind a veil of fog, it appeared to burst upon them like a revelation.

The snow grew soft beneath their feet. Little rivers began coursing away to the north. The surfaces of lakes, long locked with ice, glistened with water that buried the solid depths of ice that still lingered.

Little snow-buntings, silent for long, began their cheerful chee-chee, and far above in the bluest of skies an early covey of wild ducks winged their silent way.

The first touch of spring brought out small game in abundance. Snowshoe rabbits, leaving their hiding places, hopped about in a leisurely fashion. Ptarmigan were so numerous that the wandering bowmen grew expert in the art of beheading them with a well shot

broadhead arrow. And what could be sweeter than a ptarmigan roasted over a glowing bed of coals?

Once, creeping through tall dead grass of a year's standing, they came upon a flock of gray ducks that had come all the way from the southland.

As he smiled over the breast of a fine duck that evening Johnny's face suddenly sobered. He had bitten upon something that had nearly cost him a tooth.

"A shot," he said as he produced a mashed bit of lead. "Someone shot at him way down there where there is no ice and snow, and he brought this, a message from another land."

For a moment as he sat dreaming, eyes half closed, he thought of himself as a young native of the land, the old man the last patriarch of his tribe and the girl the last link of a vanishing race.

"Huh!" he smiled as he wakened from his revery. "Strange world! In a month we will

be with white men, living as they live." But would they?

With all the hunting and their keen enjoyment of the spring, they did not neglect the trail. Each day brought them nearer to the range of snow blown mountains. Each hour hastened the time when they must try the pass.

Sometimes at night by the campfire they spoke of it in awed whispers. At other times, under bright midday skies, they laughingly talked of the long slide they would take when they reached the other side. How little they knew of that which lay before them.

Gordon Duncan thought only of Timmie and his green gold. Faye Duncan lived most for the care and protection of the kindly old man she loved more than her own life. Johnny dreamed strange dreams of gold, fortune, and a dark haired handsome Scotch girl. At times he wondered why they had feared to meet a fellow human being. That wonder was fading. Growing ever stronger was his desire to solve the mystery of Timmie and his green gold.

"Just over the mountains, and we'll know," he told himself many times.

So at last they reached the foothills of those vast and silent mountains, and their troubles began.

As they passed the lower levels game vanished. Only once in two days did they see a rabbit. Then it escaped into the brush.

At the end of three days, after skirting many a spring-born freshet and creeping about a score of cliffs, they arrived at the base of a mountain, the lowest of all the range, but startling in its whiteness and immensity. There, sore footed and weary, they built another campfire and sat down to a meal of steaming coffee and frozen berries.

The girl looked at Johnny. There was a question in her eyes. "Dare we try the mountain?"

"It is three days' travel back to the land of game," he replied. "Can it be worse ahead? Will he turn back?"

He looked at the grizzled old Scot, who as ever sat dozing by the fire.

"He will not."

"Will he live to—to see the other side of the mountain?"

"We can only hope."

For a long time after that they sat there in silence. What were the girl's thoughts? Johnny would gladly have known. As for himself, he was thinking of the possibility of sudden tragedy for the old Scot and of their battle to win their way back to the haunts of civilized man.

"What a burial place for such a man!" he thought to himself. "A whole unmolested mountain for a tomb!"

"But," he thought a moment later, "as she has said, we must hope. It would break her heart."

Next day they started early. There was hope in each heart that they might make the pass before sunset and camp for the night on the other side.

One thing was in their favor; they soon passed from the zone of spring into the high level where winter still reigned. No longer was the snow soft under their tread, no longer were they obliged to skirt the banks of streams for a safe passage. There were no streams. All was ice and snow and barren rocks.

"Look at it," Johnny said after an hour of desperate struggle up an all but perpendicular wall. "Not a shrub, not a scrub birch or fir. Barren as the hills of doom. No living creature could be here. Tonight we go supperless and without a fire."

Faye Duncan shuddered. It was mid-afternoon, and the smoking mountain peak still loomed far above them.

"No wood, no food, no shelter!" Gladly would she have turned back. But one look at the grim look of determination on the old Scot's face sealed her lips.

"He crossed these mountains in his prime," she told herself. "He will cross them again or die."

"Look!" Johnny pointed excitedly toward a sloping waste of barren rocks.

"What is it?"

"Something moving over there."

"I can't see—"

Turning her about and pointing over his shoulder, he said, "See! Just beyond that great boulder, something white."

"It is!" she exclaimed. "A mountain goat! Oh, Johnny, can we?"

"We can, or my name is not Johnny Longbow."

Vision of a feast of wild goat's steak done to a turn floated before his eyes. In his excitement he quite forgot that they had no wood.

Carefully they prepared their attack. He would climb the narrow ledge to the right and come out above the goat. She would work round to the left and station herself among the rocks prepared to cut off his retreat up a narrow run.

For a half hour after that Johnny climbed from rock to rock until, with a deep intake of

breath, he bent his bow, nocked his arrow, then of a sudden stood up.

His heart went wild as he saw the goat not fifty yards away. As he stood there hope, despair and high resolve fought for first place in his soul. The result was a bad shot. Or was it? He could not tell. All he knew was that the nimble beast leaped high in air, then went racing away.

A second arrow followed the first. On such slopes, among such rocks, there could be no hope of recovering an arrow.

Sitting limply down upon a rock, the boy watched the great bobbing horns disappear from sight.

"Missed!" he muttered, then turning, began making his way back.

Sitting in a sheltered spot at the back of a great rock that overlooked the narrow gorge, Faye Duncan, as she waited and watched, thought of many things, of her grandfather and Johnny Longbow, of Timmie and his mysterious green gold, of her home and her own

cozy room there. Her heart warmed at this last thought, but chilled again as she looked up at the smoking crest which they must cross.

"Will we make it? Can we do it? Well—"

Of a sudden she sprang to her feet. There had come to her alert ears a sound. It seemed close at hand.

"The goat!" Seizing her bow, she nocked a broadhead and waited.

"Yes, there. There." Her hand trembled. The great horned creature was making straight for her.

Not a hundred yards away, he was coming straight on.

"Has he seen me? Would a wild goat charge his enemy?" She did not know. Her heart stood still.

"Must be sure of my shot," she told herself.

Bracing herself, she waited. Now he was eighty yards away, now sixty, now forty, and now—now—

A second more, and her broadhead arrow would have flown. But of a sudden the wild

creature's forelegs crumpled beneath him and he fell with a great rattling of horns, to go rolling over and over down a twenty-foot embankment.

Fleet as the wind, the girl leaped clear of her retreat and away down that slope. "He may merely have stumbled, may be up and away." Little she knew of wild goats, whose feet are surer than any other thing in life. The goat was dead. Johnny's first arrow had pierced him through and through.

One look at the fallen creature was enough. His eyes were glazed in death.

Climbing to the top of a boulder, she cupped her hands to give forth a long, shrill call.

"Who-hoo!"

Three times this was repeated. Then came the answer echoing back.

"He has heard. He will come." She smiled.

That evening they ate goat's meat prepared by cutting it into narrow strips and allowing it to freeze. That night they slept huddled together for warmth beneath a rude snow hut

which Johnny, under the old man's directions, was able to build against a wall of rock.

"One thing is sure," Johnny said as he prepared for rest. "There is no need for maintaining a watch to-night."

He was destined to have another thought regarding this next morning. Beside the pile of goat's meat they had left carelessly on a rock, he saw a single footprint. The goatskin and a portion of the meat was gone.

"Did us no harm," he told Faye as he pointed in astonishment at the footprint. "We still have more meat than we can carry. And the skin was worth nothing to us."

"But that creature!" she said with a shudder. "Look! The footprint is twice the length of a man's."

"And there are no toe marks," he added.

"Tell you what!" There was an air of mystery in his tone. "Remember that creature that defied the wolves that night?"

She nodded.

"It's the same; the great banshee!"

Here indeed was a mystery. But graver matters called for their attention. In spite of all they could do they had come near perishing with cold. They must be off the mountain before the end of the day, or tragedy was sure to overtake them.

CHAPTER XV

ON THE TRAIL OF THE GREAT BANSHEE

Mid-afternoon of that day found them at the crest of the mountain, caught in the grip of such a storm as one dreams of but seldom meets in real life.

A sixty-mile gale drove particles of snow fine as white sand and cutting as steel into their burning cheeks. When they attempted to go forward it was as if they were leaping against a fine meshed but unbreakable net. They could but drop on hands and knees and crawl. When they went with the wind they were appalled by the push and drive of it and by the sweeping whirls of snow that leaping fifty, a hundred feet in air, appeared nearly to reach to the very sky.

"Now," said the girl in a half sob, "I know why these mountains appear to smoke."

"If only we could find a way down," said Johnny as he lent an arm to Gordon Duncan, who was struggling against the wind.

Of a sudden a burst of wind more terrible than ever seized the girl and sent her whirling down the white slope toward the unknown abyss beyond.

In the nick of time Johnny grasped the belt of her mackinaw. Throwing himself flat behind a low rock, he clung there like grim despair until the wind lost its power and the girl was drawn back to safety.

"You—you remember," the girl panted, "we were going to try to slide down on the o—other side. I nearly did."

"Game to the last," Johnny thought.

"But your face is freezing!" Snatching off her deerskin mittens, the girl held snow against his cheeks to draw out the frost.

"There," she said, "that's done for this time. And now—"

"Now we must find a way down," said Johnny.

"Tico," the boy said, speaking to the dog cowering at his feet, "show us the way."

As if understanding his mission, the dog began creeping forward along the ridge. Knowing nothing better to do, his human companions followed.

Ten yards, twenty, thirty, battered at and buffeted, faces cut by snow, knees bruised from creeping over rocks and hard packed snow, they moved forward.

Now they paused to thaw cheeks and noses. And now, as a ruder blast struck them, they flattened themselves against the snow and clung together like grim death. But still they struggled on.

But what was this? The dog had disappeared in the snow fog before them. Plucking up hope, they redoubled their efforts. Another twenty yards found them half sheltered by a ledge; another, and they were standing on

their feet pushing forward down a gentle incline.

"Hurray! We win!" the boy shouted. "Good for Tico!"

Ten minutes later, beneath a cave-like sheltering ledge they paused to rest their trembling limbs and to take counsel for the future.

They were resting there in silence when of a sudden, some distance away, they heard the dog growl.

"It's something dangerous or he wouldn't growl like that. Come on," said the girl.

"Only a footprint in the snow," said Johnny a moment later as they came to the spot where the dog stood.

"But such a footprint!" said the girl, shaking as if seized with a sudden chill. "What can it be?"

"It's the same as before," said Johnny. "It's the great banshee!"

Then, seeing that the girl was truly frightened, he added: "That, I am convinced, is the footprint of a man."

"But look! Twice the size of our own!"

"The Eskimos have many legends regarding giants. It has always been supposed that these legends had to do with white men from the south. But supposing—"

"You wouldn't believe such things?"

"What is one to believe? There is the footprint in the snow."

"Come," said Gordon Duncan, who now joined them, "this is no time for fairy stories. The night will be upon us. Let's be going down."

As they descended they marveled more and more at the downward passage Tico had discovered.

"It is as if the giants had really cut the way through," said Johnny.

"Look!" said the girl as they paused after an hour of steady tramping. "There is another footprint in the snow."

At that they all fell silent. Night was descending upon them.

"If only we could have a fire to-night," the

girl said wearily. "I feel as if I should die of fear in the dark."

"But look!" cried Johnny as they rounded a turn. "The good banshee has granted your wish. There is a scrub forest not ten minutes away."

It was true. The gnarled trees, twisted and bent, were scarce six feet tall, but dead trunks were dry as tinder. Soon, in a sheltered spot, they had built a roaring fire and were preparing to boil coffee and roast the goat's meat they had packed across the mountain.

"To-morrow," said Gordon Duncan, "we shall see the valley of green gold."

CHAPTER XVI

DOWN WITH THE AVALANCHE

The sun was setting over a wilderness of snow and winter-washed, bleak, bare land, as late next day the three travelers, rounding a towering granite crag, came at last into full view of all that lay beyond. It was the promised land, the valley of green gold.

For a full moment they stood there, motionless. The scene that lay before them, glistening snow turned to a rosy hue by the setting sun, crags, torrents, mists, rushing little streams, all that go to make mountains, valleys and rugged hills, all that is the spring break-up in a land of ice and snow was here. Many days before they had started for this divide. Weeks of toilsome travel, weeks of perils and adventure had come into their lives

since Gordon Duncan had said, "There is the knife. The trail leads up this ridge."

Now they were at the divide, ready to descend into a wild valley. And why? Perhaps Gordon Duncan knew all. Johnny and Faye knew little enough. Yet, with the tender feeling of youth for an old man who was perhaps on his last long journey, his final joyous adventure, they had followed his lead. Now here they stood.

"There's a great river yonder," said Johnny, lifting his field glasses to his eyes. "Wouldn't be surprised if it were the headwaters of the Yukon."

"But look!" he exclaimed. "There's something moving down there. Here, tell me what it is. It seems to be marooned on that little island in midstream. Water's overflowing the ice. Water must be rising. May flood the island."

The girl took the glasses and with steady gaze studied the spot he pointed out.

As for Gordon Duncan, he stood there erect, motionless, seeing all that lay before him, mountains, rivers, hills and valleys. He appeared to search for that which he did not see.

"Should be to the right down there," he mumbled once. "Can it be that I have mistaken the pass? No. That could not be. Yet if it were there one would see a curl of smoke. It is growing dusk. Time for the evening meal." He shaded his eyes to look again.

"There *is* something moving there," the girl said to Johnny. "I can't make out what it is. Might be caribou; might be Indians. Can't tell. In the morning light we can tell."

"Indians." The thought gave Johnny a start. Even today in this wild out-of-the-way corner of the world, Indians were not to be trusted too far. In a fit of anger, in a moment of greed, they might kill. And who would be the wiser?

"We can't camp here," Johnny said as a cold wind, sweeping across the perpetual snow of the mountain side chilled him to the bone.

"Have to go on down. May find a sheltering ledge." He slung his pack over his shoulder, then motioned the older man to guide them on.

"The way is down," Gordon Duncan said huskily. "That's all I know. Young man, your foot is surer than mine. Lead on."

So Johnny took up the task of trail blazer, and even as his eyes worked out a passage here and a detour there, his mind went back to that day when he first met Faye Duncan, the day on which they killed their first caribou. Woven with his thoughts of that which had happened then were wonders regarding the creatures moving about on the river island, and Gordon Duncan's purpose in bringing them on this wild chase into the unknown.

An hour later in a sheltered nook they pitched their small tents and built a crackling fire of scrub fir trees. Over the fire they cooked the last of their goat's meat, and boiled coffee.

After that for a time they sat over their crude table of rocks to stare away over the

moonlit mountains. Johnny and the girl were wondering about many things. The great river, the island with living creatures moving upon it, their strange mission in this stranger land, all these came in for their share of perplexing thought.

It was quite wonderful as they sat there thinking of all that had gone before, and that which lay about them. On the far side was a storm, on the crest a wild tumult, but down here was quiet and peace.

There were no clouds. The moon came up. Everywhere were purple shadows, silent and deep. Not a breath of air stirred. Not a wild creature in all that land but appeared to be at rest.

"It's like all of life," Gordon Duncan said solemnly. "At times we find ourselves in the midst of terrible trouble, storms of life. We may have companions in these troubles, or they may be hidden away, our own secret troubles. In any case, it is quite wonderful to feel that about us, standing shoulder to

shoulder with us, are friends ready at an instant's notice to reach out a helping hand.

"Much of the meaning of life is just here." His tone became more thoughtful. "Life, after all, is a storm and in a way the worst of storms, for many of us haven't the faintest notion whither we are bound. One thing alone we know, we must struggle on. The one thing that makes the struggle far more than worth while is the splendid human companionship we enjoy while we are in the midst of the storm. As we travel on, it seems there is always a hand outstretched to guide us home."

"A hand outstretched," Faye said, thinking out loud. Before her mind's vision she saw again the glistening slope down which she had been about to glide when Johnny seized her and drew her back.

"Back from what?" she asked herself.

As if in answer, Johnny said, "Look!"

Her eyes followed the direction of his arm. Then her cheeks went white.

The moon, rising higher and higher, had

brought out the upper ridges of the mountain they had crossed. At the point where she had lost her footing and had been saved from a sudden plunge by the boy, the snow, blown over and beaten down by countless storms, had taken on the form of an inverted saucer. The edge of this great saucer hung more than a hundred feet over the edge of a gigantic precipice. From the outer rim of this snow saucer to the rocky ridges below was thousands of feet. The girl's head whirled, her heart went sick at thought of that which she had escaped by so little. One second more of downward glide over that glistening saucer, and she would have been lost forever.

"An arm reaching out to one during the storms of life," she said in a tone that was deep with emotion.

"Let's not think of it," said Johnny. "See how the moonlight plays on the river far below. It has painted a path of gold, a path that leads beyond doubt to home and the little cottage you love."

"If you'll excuse me," he said a moment later, "I think I'll take a stroll along the ledge. Sort of want—want to think a little."

For a considerable distance the shelving rocky ledge led upward. Johnny followed it, to find himself at last standing upon a natural platform twenty feet square.

From this point the whole world seemed spread out before him in the moonlight. White stretches of snow, black piles of rock, gleaming ribbons of water that were creeks and rivers, all these he saw as in a dream.

Throwing back his shoulders, he took in three breaths of fresh air. A whirring of wings told that wild ducks were passing. Spring was here. And with spring a young man dreams of work, success, power. The life he had lived during the past few weeks seemed, as he looked at it now, quite purposeless.

He had been helping someone else solve mysteries and run down one or two for himself. But one who spends his life running down mysteries gets nowhere. One must think

of his future. True, no one was dependent upon his earnings. Yet, sometime, someone was likely to be. He meant to have a home of his own. Money earned and saved paved the way to such a future.

"And yet—" He saw the face of Gordon Duncan, and the eager, anxious look of the girl who, without perhaps knowing it, had come to depend upon his wisdom, skill and strength.

"Huh!" he grunted. "What's the good of having a purpose to your every act? What's youth for if not for adventure?"

Turning his back upon the moon and the shimmering valley below, he went tramping back toward camp.

As he rounded a rocky point he came in sight of the cheery glow of their campfire. He saw a short cut back.

"Right over there," he said to himself, "straight across that broad stretch of winter packed snow. What could be sweeter? I'll

use my bow as an Alpine staff. Not a bit of danger. Be there in no time."

Having been raised on the plains, Johnny knew little of the mountains. The great broad bank of snow he was to cross, ten feet deep here, twenty there, was indeed hard packed by beating winter winds. But beneath it, forces of nature had long been at work. Little trickles of melted snow, working from pebble to pebble, had worn narrow beds beneath the bank. These tiny trickles had become rushing rivulets. The great snowbank, clinging there to the steep mountain side, was gradually being undermined.

Totally unconscious of all this, Johnny marched blithely along down the white incline.

Here the grade was steeper and he was obliged to move with care. There the surface was like a great broad pavement. Here he paused to admire the reflection of the moon in a dark pool of water, and there stood staring away at a wavering light far out and below.

"Might be on that river island. May be Indians," he thought.

Faint and from some distance down came a disturbing sound. It was like some heavy body plunging down.

"What could that have been?" He quickened his pace.

Coming to a broad break in the snow, he gripped his bow securely and leaped the chasm.

Was it the shock of his landing that loosened the avalanche? Who can say? Enough that at this precise moment there came a solemn threatening rumble, and the boy felt himself moving downward.

With one last effort, he threw himself flat, gripped his bow, then committed his spirit to the great Father of all. The next instant the cutting of cold air across his face told him he was going down, down, down—to what?

This lasted for a space of seconds that seemed years. Then came a sudden shock; after that silence and darkness.

Faye Duncan and her grandfather, as was

their custom before retiring for the night, were partaking of a cup of tea when the sudden thunder of the avalanche reached their ears. A serious, questioning look passed from the girl to her grandsire as they sprang to their feet. The glance was returned. Not a word was spoken.

As they stood there listening, intent, motionless, a swift cold breath of air fanned their cheeks, a thin film of snow gathered on their garments. That was all.

It was all over in a moment. Once more the vast silence of the wilderness at night settled about them.

Gordon Duncan was by nature a silent man. Suspense only served to deepen that silence. For a full hour he sat there beside his granddaughter while the firelight played across his immobile face.

"If he comes to-night," he said at last, rising slowly, "he'll be late. We'll heap the fire high. It will serve as a beacon. We—we can look in the morning," he added slowly.

"By night the mountain is treacherous. Nothing is to be gained."

Faye Duncan lay beneath her blankets a long time before sleep came. In her mind many questions revolved themselves like the turn of a heathen prayer wheel. Where was Johnny Longbow? Why did he not return? What was it that had brought them so far into the wilderness? An old man's dream of treasure. Her grandfather had said it should be near here. Was it? Was their search to end so soon? Would Johnny return? If not, what then? What of those moving creatures on the river island?

"The river is rising," she told herself. "Soon that low island will be flooded. They must leave it. If they are human beings, I hope they have a boat."

Then a thought struck her all of a heap. Her grandfather would find in the need of these people, if need there was, a mission. Would this delay their search, their return? She hoped not. Of late the wilderness had

seemed to be closing in upon her, shutting her from the world she had known. She longed for the return to their cozy cabin where the first snowdrops would be blooming and all the air fragrant with spring.

"But I must see this through," she told herself stoutly. "One can not—"

Her thoughts broke off. Gordon Duncan was talking in his sleep.

"We found it together." His words were distinct. "I was sure it was a great discovery. I urged him to help me bring it out. I talked of money, of the name he would have. But he would not listen. He was a recluse. He would not come. I went for food. He's there still—out there in the hills alone. For long years I could not recall the way. But now I know. It all came to me there by the tree of the knife. I shall see him soon. He will still be there. He is a recluse—a recluse—he—" His voice trailed off into nothingness, and again the oppressive silence of the mountains brooded over all.

CHAPTER XVII

THE GIANT HUNCHBACK

Before she fell asleep that night Faye found herself wondering about many things. Why had her grandfather brought her so far into the white wilderness? Why had he not told her of the earlier chapters of his life? Who was the man of mystery, her grandfather's friend of other days? What was the treasure he had babbled of in his sleep? Above all, her mind was troubled by the strange disappearance of Johnny Longbow. Had the avalanche swallowed him up? Had he slipped from some ice encrusted ledge? Had he fallen into the hands of unfriendly whites or Indians?

In the midst of all these puzzlings she fell into troubled sleep to dream of bleak

mountains, rushing floods and wild Arctic storms.

Day was breaking when on awakening she struggled to an upright position to gaze wildly about her.

Realizing at last where she was, she took a moment for recalling that which had befallen them on the previous day, then sprang into action.

After a hasty toilet she kindled a fire and put coffee on to boil.

Next she took up Johnny's light field glass, and walking to a point of vantage, began sweeping the horizon.

She was searching for some sign of their lost companion. The wide circling of her glass continued for a full three minutes. Then of a sudden, as her lips parted and her face became tense, the glass remained directed at one spot, far off in the river valley.

"Grandfather! Grandfather!" she exclaimed after ten tense seconds, "Wake up! There are people on that river island. They

are marooned! The river is rising. The floods will reach them and sweep them away unless help comes. We must go!"

Gordon Duncan was now on his feet. Seizing the glass, he studied the situation for a moment, then said quietly:

"You are right. We must help them. At once!"

"But how?" said the girl. "We have no boat."

"God will show us the way."

Three minutes later, disregarding the water boiling for coffee, carrying only their bow and quiver of arrows apiece, they went racing down the mountain side.

The memory of that race will remain long with Faye Duncan. Slipping, sliding, now racing, now gliding and now creeping, they made their way downward. Now their path was a plateau, now a cliff, and now the bed of a boiling, rushing stream. Now they seemed about to send an avalanche sweeping

down. And now, as they attempted to cross a turbulent torrent they appeared in greater danger than those whom they would rescue.

In the end they won the race, only to find themselves standing at the river's brink with a hundred yards of rushing water between them and those whom they would save, and with no apparent means of rendering any aid.

"Well," said the girl, "what next?"

"What indeed?" said Gordon Duncan, a look of despair coming over his face.

Had Faye chanced to have wakened from her sound sleep of the previous night at a time shortly after one in the morning; had the moonlight been bright enough and her glass strong enough to enable her to see clearly for the distance of a mile, she might have witnessed as strange a drama as ever was played upon the white stage of the North. As it was, only the eye of the All-Seeing One witnessed that which passed at the end of the great

snow pile created by the avalanche Johnny Longbow's foot had loosened.

By some strange bit of Providence the boy was not buried by the avalanche that had carried him down. He was struck on the head by a block of hard packed snow ice, and rendered unconscious. After that he was pitched and tumbled, knocked, bumped and beaten until his body was a mass of bruises. He was left at last, still unconscious and half dead, at the foot of the now silent, inanimate avalanche that had been his undoing.

At this hour two figures, approaching from opposite directions, came near to the unconscious boy. One was a great gaunt brown beast. The other, a short, squat, powerful figure, might at a moment's notice have puzzled a skilled man of science. Was he man or beast? Was he an Indian of these wilds, or was he some giant ape escaped from captivity?

He wore clothes. This marked him for a man.

Truth was, the creature was a man. Yet so bent and twisted was his body, so bowed his crooked legs, so ugly and distorted his visage that one might have traveled America from end to end without meeting with another being such as he.

As his small eyes caught sight of the unconscious boy, they gleamed like twin stars. Johnny's stout hand still gripped his bow. This strong bow was a prize in any land. How much more in a wilderness! Not less valuable was the quiver of arrows that lay nearby. And if he were dead? But then, too often in wild lands it matters little that one is not dead. If he were to be found helpless, this is enough to excuse robbery.

The curious deformed creature was bending over the boy when of a sudden his alert ear caught some slight sound, a scraping perhaps, or a sniffing breath. Looking up quickly, he found himself staring into the burning eyes of a great gaunt bear which had,

beyond doubt, been disturbed from his hibernating sleep by the thundering avalanche.

Some form of grizzly, a silver-tip perhaps, this bear promised to be a formidable foe. At such a time of half stupor and intense hunger he must be doubly dangerous.

The Indian took one step backward. Then he paused. The next instant, with hands that were as powerful as man has known, and fingers as cunning, he wrenched the bow from the unconscious boy's grasp and sent an arrow crashing into the gaunt beast's side.

For a period of five minutes after that he stood motionless, watching the dying throes of the bear.

Then, with no apparent effort, he lifted the boy to a position of ease across his deformed shoulders, picked up the bow and arrows, and went marching away.

He tramped doggedly on for the better part of the night. Just as dawn was breaking he arrived at the door of a long, low,

crudely built cabin. Depositing his burden by the door, he went inside.

* * * *

Faye Duncan and her grandfather watched the movements of the frightened natives on the little island for some time before anything like a solution of the problem offered itself to their minds.

That these people were natives they did not doubt. Whether they were savage or half civilized they did not for a moment question. They were human. That was enough. If a way offered, they must be saved.

Racing along beside the men were several dogs. Close to the water's edge were well packed sleds. The constant rising of the water was shown by the fact that twice the sleds had to be drawn back.

"It's a matter of an hour," said Gordon Duncan. "Perhaps not that. What's to be done?"

Suddenly the girl's face lighted with a gleam of hope. Quickly drawing off her

sweater that had protected her from many an Arctic gale, she did a strange thing. Having cut the end of a sleeve squarely off at the lower end to break the binding stitches, she began rapidly unraveling it and dropping the yarn in a loose pile upon the ground.

Not understanding at all, her grandfather stood watching in unfeigned astonishment.

When the entire sleeve became a mere coil of yarn on the earth, she looked away at the rushing flood.

She seemed to measure the distance with her eye. Apparently satisfied with the results, she suddenly took up her quiver, selected an arrow, then began tying one end of the yarn tightly about it.

Then Gordon Duncan understood.

"Good girl!" he murmured. "May God grant you success!"

Setting the arrow to her bow, the girl, aiming high, sent the arrow with the slender line attached speeding across the flood.

That the keen eyed natives on the opposite

shore saw and, to an extent, understood, was shown by their sudden grouping beside a long pine that grew at the water's brink.

"Fell short," the girl murmured, a note of despair creeping into her voice.

The distance was greater than she thought. The arrow, having curved to the flood, dropped with a splash and being caught in the grip of dark waters, went speeding downstream.

Faye drew the stout yarn line in slowly. It was wet now, heavy. No use to make another try.

But Gordon Duncan carried in his veins the blood of the mighty Bruce. He was engaged in the business of unraveling Faye's other sleeve.

"You're a fine shot, Lass," he rumbled, "but for a burst of power take an arm of old hickory like Gordon Duncan's own."

It was a great deal for the modest old man to say. That it was not too much was proven when, a moment later, his arrow, with the last

available coil of yarn sailing fast and low, lost itself in the branches of the lone pine on the opposite shore. A shout of admiration and triumph came from the distant shore.

That the natives knew what was expected of them was soon shown. After a moment of wild scrambling in which dogs were trampled upon and sleds overturned, they began the business of tying together a long cord of their own. And this was of strong rawhide.

"If only the yarn holds," Faye murmured breathlessly.

"Never fear," said the old Scot. "'Twas a present to your mother from a French Canadian granny. Homespun from native wool it is. Nae bit o' shoddy there!"

That the curious creature who had sent Johnny's arrows crashing into the gaunt bear's side, and so beyond doubt saved the boy's life, had not carried him that distance to his own rude cabin without purpose, was

shown the moment he arrived there. What that purpose might be remained locked within his own misshapen breast.

Having entered his cabin, he took down first a rude soapstone jar of water, and second a skin bottle half filled with some liquid.

After feeling the boy over carefully, possibly for broken bones, he sat up with a grunt of apparent satisfaction. He next poured the water over Johnny's neck and bare shoulders. And now, with beady eyes searching for signs of life, he removed the wooden stopper from the leather bottle and poured a part of its contents down the boy's throat.

What was this strange liquid? Native medicine, beyond doubt. Carefully selected leaves, stems, roots and bulbs, boiled over a slow fire perhaps. Who knows? That it was a potent drug one was soon enough to know. Two minutes had not passed before the boy groaned, moved, sat up, stared about him, then asked in a dazed fashion:

"Where am I?"

Without answering his question, if indeed he understood it at all, the brawny hunchback lifted him from the earth and, with greatest care, carried him inside to deposit him upon a litter of skins in the corner.

Of a sudden, as Gordon Duncan waited the results of the preparations that were going forward on the river island, his eyes wandered to the mountainside, and his gaze became transfixed.

"The cabin!" he exclaimed. "Timmie's cabin! And smoke is coming from the chimney! He is still there! Still there!" At once he became greatly agitated.

"He is a recluse!" he went on rapidly. "A natural recluse, but a good man and a faithful companion. He once saved my life. And to think—" he drew his hand across his eyes, "to think that this moment of all those long years I am able to look upon that cabin again!"

He took a step forward as if to scale the mountain. But Faye tugged at his arm.

"The natives," she insisted. "Without our aid they may perish."

"Ah, yes." He became calm. "I must wait. Our duty is always to do the greatest good to largest numbers. It's God's law. All things in His good time."

Turning, he watched with ever increasing anxiety the preparations that were going forward on the little island across the waters.

CHAPTER XVIII

SAVED BY A LINE

Exactly a quarter of an hour, measured by Gordon Duncan's large and ancient time-piece, elapsed before the natives on the island announced by a wild burst of shouting that they were ready for Gordon Duncan and Faye to haul away on the line of homespun yarn.

Faye found her heart beating wildly as she seized the slender line that spanned the rushing water. Well enough she knew that should this line fail them, a half score of lives must be lost.

"And life," she told herself as her lips moved in silent prayer, "life is such a precious heritage."

Slowly, steadily, they began to haul away. Moment by moment the tug on that slender line grew stronger.

Now as the current rising in mad fury redoubled its efforts to defeat them, it seemed that surely the slender line must snap.

"It—it's like landing a great trout," the girl told herself.

And now, just as it seemed the line must break, the rush subsided. Hauling away with a will they at last gave forth an exultant shout. Gordon Duncan's hand gripped the end of the stout rawhide rope that now spanned the flood.

"We have won, child! We have won!" he panted.

But had they? There was much work yet to be done. A stout line now connected them with the imperiled ones. How would these work out their salvation?

Gordon Duncan dragged the line to a stout tree and fastened it securely there. This done, his work for the time was over.

It will not seem strange that his eyes wandered once more to that mysterious cabin

that had, beyond doubt, at one time been his home. Hardly had he done this than he leaped to his feet with a wild exclamation on his lips:

"He's leaving! He — he — he's running away!"

This seemed true. Certainly a tall, fur clad man, driving four huge wolfhounds hitched to a long sled, left the cabin and was now racing along a narrow plateau at top speed. And ever as he ran, he appeared to urge his dogs to greater effort.

"He's leaving!" Gordon Duncan said more quietly. "He's running away, and he has the treasure on his sled. You don't think—" He turned troubled, questioning eyes on his granddaughter. "You don't believe Timmie'd run away with the green gold?"

"No," said the girl without knowing why, "No, I don't think he would. He probably does not know you are Gordon Duncan."

"Unless it is the years. Man's mind is queer," said Gordon Duncan. "God knew

best when he said, 'It is not well for man to dwell alone.' "

"But see!" the girl exclaimed suddenly. She pointed across the flood.

A strange procession was taking off from the distant shore. Three dog teams drawing three loaded sleds, lashed one before the other, went fearlessly into the flood. Clinging to the sleds were ten or more human beings, men, women and children.

"Bravo!" exclaimed Gordon Duncan. "They will win yet. They can't swim. No matter. Their dogs can. They will cling to the sleds. The rawhide line will save them from the terrible flood and land them safely on this shore."

"But come on!" the girl shouted. "We must be downstream to help them."

She sped downstream, closely followed by her sturdy grandfather whose eyes ever and anon looked longingly away to the spot where the team of great gray dogs was fast disappearing.

As for Faye, her thoughts were all for the little brown people who had put so boldly out into the racing white waters with only a slender cord to save them from certain destruction.

As the teams and sleds with their clinging human freight were caught by the flood, they swung squarely about, facing upstream. It was then that the little brown huskies proved themselves true heroes. Beaten back, carried off their feet, buffeted at, half drowned by the racing torrent, these dogs kept their small feet going at a feverish rate.

Had it not been for these many pairs of little brown feet, each doing its bit, there can be no doubt but that the rawhide rope must have snapped. As it was, it held and like a great pendulum, dogs, sleds, men and cord swung slowly, surely across the racing peril.

Faye's heart stood still as, pausing at the point where they must arrive, if indeed they were to arrive at all, she caught the slow sweep that was bearing them on.

Would they make it? Could they? Would

the little brown beasts give up in despair? Would the rope part?

Now they were a quarter way across, and now a half. Here at the very heart of the torrent, they appeared to hang suspended.

"They do not move," she breathed.

And yet, yes, yes, they must be moving. A tree on the opposite bank, hidden ten seconds before, was visible now.

Of a sudden fresh peril appeared. Beneath the water was winter ice that had not yet thawed. Loosing its grip, a broad cake of this rose suddenly to the surface. Twenty yards above the drifting band it appeared about to ram them, to snap their support, to overturn their sleds and send them to the bottom.

But again, as if an invisible hand had reached down to shove them forward, the pendulum swung faster. The ice, missing them, raced harmlessly on.

A moment later Faye was lifting a laughing brown child from his mother's arms, and a

joyous group of nomad people were clambering up the shelving bank to safety.

Faye's joy knew no bounds. They had been instrumental, with God's help, in saving a half score of lives. While Gordon Duncan shared quietly in her joy, his heart was in the hills. His eyes followed the trail over which the four great dogs and their white bearded master had vanished.

Sensing all this, Faye resolved at once to enlist their new-found friends in a fresh endeavor to come up with her Grandfather's former companion, and so to solve that which for her had become a great mystery.

"But first," she told herself, with a fresh pang of pain throbbing at her heartstrings, "we must try to find some trace of Johnny Longbow."

The little brown people they had saved proved to be Indians from the land of Little Sticks. In their search for food they had been forced farther and farther north until they came to the upper reaches of the mighty

Yukon. Having killed three caribou, they had found their needs supplied for the moment. This was enough. They had pitched their tents on the little island. As they rested before the long journey back to their accustomed hunting grounds, they had been caught unawares by the flood.

Always a wandering people, ever grateful for kindness, they were ready for any undertaking or adventure. There was still a supply of caribou meat on their sleds. What next should be done?

To the one member of their company who could understand English, Faye explained the curious circumstances that had brought them so far north. She told also of the misadventure that apparently had befallen their traveling companion.

No sooner was a simple meal of stewed meat and tea over than the entire company spread out fan-shape in a search for the lost boy.

Four o'clock found them returning to camp one by one with reports of failure. Only one clue was brought to light. The three men of the Indian party returned bearing on their shoulders great pieces of bear meat. This bear, they explained, had been slain with a bow and arrow. They produced the arrow as proof. And they explained further with many a strange exclamation that the man who shot the arrow was the most powerful giant that ever lived. No Eskimo, no Indian, no white man they had ever known pulled a bow with such a force and power. They felt quite sure he must be some strange spirit being, not human at all.

"It is Johnny's arrow," said Faye at once. "But he was possessed of no such strength. Who could have shot the arrow?"

She suggested the aged recluse, but Gordon Duncan shook his head.

"He was a rather frail man. Now he is old. It is impossible."

Here, then, was fresh mystery.

"We can do no more for Johnny Longbow," said Gordon Duncan. "He is in another's hands. To-morrow we will follow the trail of my ancient friend. Since this is true it is well that I tell you something of that which befell me on this very mountain many years ago."

Dropping upon one of the Indians' deer-skins, Faye awaited eagerly the strange story which she believed was at last to be unfolded.

Gordon Duncan was slow in beginning. The girl's heart was sore. It is little wonder that her mind should return to thoughts of her brave young companion and his tragic disappearance.

"Grandfather," she said suddenly, "God is cruel."

Knowing full well that she was seeing in her mind's eye the tumbled heaps of snow, earth and rock piled up by the avalanche, Gordon Duncan spoke quietly.

"You are thinking of God as if he were all nature.

"God is not nature, and nature is not God. I think there can be no doubt but that God often works through nature to do His will. Perhaps no man living knows precisely God's relation to nature. Of one thing we may rest assured, whatever God does through nature is sure to be just and kind."

A hush settled over the mountain and something whispered to the girl that all would be well. So, once more in perfect calm, she settled back to await Gordon Duncan's story.

In the meantime, in a far away cabin, still weak from his terrible experience, Johnny Longbow lay upon a bed of skins and watched a creature of prodigious strength and surpassing ugliness boil a pot of broth over a fire in a crude hearth set up in one corner of the cabin.

"Where am I?" he asked himself. "What

has happened to me? Where are my friends? What is to become of me?"

To none of these questions did he find a satisfactory answer, so once more he gave himself over to thoughts of his strange host.

"This," he told himself, "is the being we have called the great banshee." A thrill coursed up his spine at the thought. Had other evidence been lacking, the size and shape of the man's feet would be proof enough.

"They'd fit those tracks we have been seeing to perfection," he told himself.

Truth was, the creature's feet were so deformed and long as to suggest that a second foreleg which bent forward had taken the place of a foot.

Long and anxiously Johnny studied this strange being. That he was human there could be no question. Was he Eskimo, Indian or white man? There was something of all these in him. His skin was the brownish copper of an Indian. He dressed like an Eskimo.

Yet he was a giant of a man in spite of his deformity.

"Were he able to stand erect as other men do, he would measure six feet six," Johnny said to himself. "Who ever heard of an Eskimo that size?"

Once more he took to studying the man, his face, his actions.

"He seems bright enough and that stuff he's boiling smells good," he mused. "Hope he gives me some. Wonder how he lives? Hunting, I suppose. But what weapons?"

As if reading his thoughts, the hunchback stepped to a dark corner and brought forth two bows.

One Johnny recognized at once as his own.

"That's fine," he told himself. "When I am strong enough to leave this place I won't starve at once. Shows some intelligence, his saving my bow for me." His joy in this matter was destined to be short lived.

But now his eyes fell on the other bow.

"A back breaker," he told himself. "Never saw such a bow. Must take a pull of eighty-five, perhaps a hundred pounds to shoot it. Man, Oh, man!" His knowledge of the hunchback's powers was growing. Nor was it lessened when this strange man nocked an arrow fully thirty-six inches in length and, with the greatest ease, drew his bow to send the arrow crashing into the opposite wall.

The next move sent consternation into the boy's heart. Seizing Johnny's fifty pound yew bow, the hunchback picked up a second arrow of the same length and nocked it for a shot.

Now Johnny used twenty-eight inch arrows. To bend his bow for a thirty-six inch arrow was to court disaster. His mouth opened in a cry of alarm. But too late. The iron arm of his curious host drew back. For the fraction of a second the bow stood the strain, then, just as the arrow sped, there came a rending crash, and the bow broke.

Standing there, dazed, with the two fragments of the bow still in his hand, the giant

hunchback, as if expecting an explanation to this startling affair, stared stupidly about him.

Of a sudden, dropping the shattered bow, he seized his own bow and, pointing at it, began jabbering in a tongue which Johnny understood not at all.

What he did understand was that the hunchback considered his own bow a very superior affair, and Johnny's little more than a toy.

"Well, that puts a long question mark after the probability of my getting out of this land," Johnny told himself.

"In the meantime," he thought a moment later, "how about a little stew?"

He made some motions as of eating. The hunchback understood. Soon, like friends of long standing, they were eating out of a single huge wooden bowl.

There was little enough ceremony about this meal. With their fingers they took dripping morsels from the stew and ate them so. Ptarmigan and rabbit meat with some dried

roots and seeds of native growth had gone into the stew. Yet Johnny thought he had not tasted a better one. When only the thick broth was left, they took turns at tipping up the bowl and drinking from its rim.

"It's a curious world," Johnny told himself, "a very strange and startling world. I wonder what is to become of me now?"

As he looked about the rude shelter he saw no signs of a food store. "My bow is broken," he told himself. "Without this queer creature's aid I shall starve."

At that he forgot his troubles in watching the hunchback. He was beating his breast and repeating over and over, "Omnakok! Omnakok! Omnakok!"

"Perhaps he's trying to tell me his name," the boy thought. At this he pointed at the hunchback and said:

"Omnakok."

The face of this queer being expanded in a crooked grimace which Johnny took to be a smile. Then, turning about, he took down a

heavy slab of wood. Having grasped a sharp instrument similar to a carpenter's drawshave, he began making the shavings fly.

"What now?" thought Johnny, as he dropped back to his place among the skins in the corner.

CHAPTER XIX

GORDON DUNCAN'S STORY

"It was years back, so many I have fairly lost track." Gordon Duncan's tone was deep and vibrant with emotion as he began his story of a recluse companion and the treasure of green gold. "There had been some discoveries of gold back of the Beyond among the hills and I went. I was younger then. Went alone. That was my way.

"I met with great misfortune. I found no gold. Food was scarce. I knew little of the longbow in those days. In making a try for a mountain goat, I fell over a ledge and broke a leg.

"I might have died there like some maimed wild creature, had it not been for him." His eyes wandered to the mountain side, to the

lone cabin and the trail that led away and away.

"He was a recluse then, but a kindly soul. He found me, carried me to his cabin and cared for me.

"When I was well, he hunted for us both. It was he who taught me to prize the longbow and arrow.

"In time I grew proficient in the use of these primitive weapons. Then, like him, I wandered far in search of food.

"It was on one of these hunting trips that I came upon a strange sort of grotto in the side of a cliff. There were ashes of a long burned out campfire near the entrance. My curiosity was aroused by this. Making a rude torch of dry willow twigs, I lighted my way back a hundred feet or more.

"There on a ledge, half buried in dust, I found some curious objects.

"'Copper,'" I said at once. 'Not worth much. Take some back for souvenirs.'

"I chose a crudely formed lamp for burning tallow, and a rudely fashioned bowl.

"But how heavy they were! I had not seen such copper before.

"I carried them to our cabin and set them upon the hand-hewn table. When Timmie returned, with half a caribou slung across his back, he looked at my find with interest.

"Once he had lifted them he became excited. Questions came thick and fast. Where had I found them? Was it far? Were there many such? How his words flew!

"‘Why?’ I asked at last. ‘They are only copper. There is no want of copper here; whole boulders of it in the beds of streams.’

"‘Copper!’ he exclaimed. ‘Copper! That’s not copper. Haven’t you lifted them? They’re made of green gold.’”

"Green gold! I thought he was mad. But he was not." Again Gordon Duncan's eyes wandered to the hills. "He was sane enough. He'd had a course in such things at some University; worked in a jeweler's place, too.

Seems they mix some copper with gold. The result is a greenish combination called green gold.

"And there you are." His words became deeply reminiscent. "I had been hunting gold for months, digging here, panning dirt there, but when I did find gold I needed neither pick nor pan. And I didn't know it was gold.

"The next day we made three trips to that cave. Each time we brought back all the green gold we could carry. That cave must have been a goldsmith shop of some ancient tribe. Every nook and cranny was crowded with green gold.

"All we have to do now," I said, "is to take this out to civilization. We are rich."

"Civilization?" Timmie said, his eyes dreamy with thoughts of wide open spaces, "Who wants to go back to that?" You see he was a born recluse. "Besides," he went on, "there's the gold mine. We must find that."

"Well, up to that time I hadn't once thought of the mine from which this gold had been

taken. But from that moment the finding of that mine became an obsession with both of us.

"We thought of nothing else until an unusually heavy snowfall drove all game away and left us facing starvation.

"I wanted him to come away then." Once more Gordon Duncan's tone was mellow with memories. "He wouldn't come; but told me to go, to return with fairer weather, and carry away my share of the treasure.

"It was a hard trek back. I was lost many times. Then I went snow blind. Before my sight was gone I drove my knife in the tree, as you saw it back there.

"'I'll find that and be able to make my way back,' I told myself.

"But I never did, until just the other day. I reached the shelter of civilization more dead than alive. My sight was a year coming back. Then all memory of trails was gone.

"Not until I saw that knife in the tree did it all come back to me. And now," he said sadly, "he is gone!"

"We must follow," said the girl. Her voice was husky.

"Yes, we must follow, not for the green gold, but for him," said Gordon Duncan.

"I have learned since," said the old man, after a long silence, "that those strange implements, dishes and ornaments, coming as they do from the long lost past, are worth many times their weight in yellow gold.

"It is this that I would tell him, and that it is not good for him to live alone; that in the end disaster must befall him here, just as it did to the lone moose back there in our native forest."

Faye found herself greatly impressed by her grandfather's story. She was as puzzled as he by the actions of the recluse, and as eager to follow his trail. Only one thought dampened her ardor. Every mile that led away from this mountain seemed to lessen their hopes of ever seeing Johnny Longbow again. Yet fate is often very strange.

She slept well that night, and woke early,

to find herself on tiptoe, filled with a desire to be away. To their great joy they found their new found Indian friends eager to join them.

"Their dogs will be of great service in following the trail," said Gordon Duncan as he hurried through final preparations for what, they both felt, was to be a long and dangerous march.

Dangerous indeed it proved in the end.

Dawn found Gordon Duncan and his granddaughter with two of the Indian men and their best dog team on the up-bound trail. The Indian women and children remained behind. They had a supply of food. Caribou would soon be trekking northward. The air would be full of wild fowl, geese, ducks, swans, cranes. Spring was on the way. They would not want.

For the first hour and a half of the journey the native dog-team lagged. They must be urged forward. But, of a sudden, as they reached a higher level, they put their noses

to the earth, sniffed two or three times, then went straight away at a brisk trot.

"Good!" said Gordon Duncan as a satisfied smile overspread his wrinkled face. "They have found Timmie's trail." He always spoke of the recluse as Timmie, the only name he had known him by. "Now they will not pause nor lag until they have come up with him."

All day they followed the team. Spring surely was coming. They saw it in little rushing streams. They smelled it in the moisture that rose from the rocky ledges. They heard it in the honking of the first flock of wild geese.

But the signs of spring only saddened Faye Duncan. "Spring means life," she thought, "renewed life. And poor Johnny Longbow who came with us so far, who in such an unselfish way gave up his own plans to aid Grandfather in the realization of his life's dearest dream, lies beneath the eternal snows."

But did he? She could not be sure. She

dared hope, for was not his arrow found piercing the carcass of that monstrous bear? If his arrow had escaped had not he? Who could have shot that arrow?

To this question she found no answer. Of one thing she was certain—if Johnny Longbow were free to come to them he would be at her side. Her heart swelled with undefinable emotion at the thought.

Still they traveled on. Over a ledge, down a ravine, across a plateau, the trail led.

At times they caught glimpses of the river, a bright blue ribbon, far below.

In places the river was white. This meant that ice had risen to the surface.

"Soon go out, that one ice," said the Indian who spoke English. "Then, whoooo! Big splash, big rush, plenty noise!"

Faye found herself hoping that they might be within sight of the river when the break-up came. That was one of Nature's dramas she had long desired to see.

Just at sunset the dog team plunged down

a steep embankment and piled up, sled and all, forty feet below.

From that time until dark they went down. Down, down, down the trail ran until, as camping time came, they were surprised to find themselves in a narrow valley on a level with the river.

"Can he be mad enough to take to the river?" Gordon Duncan asked.

"Surely not," Faye answered.

Gordon Duncan shook his head.

As for the Indians, they looked from Gordon Duncan to the girl, then back to Duncan again. Whatever thoughts passed through their primitive minds remained unexpressed.

CHAPTER XX

ADRIFT IN THE NIGHT

The ways of the savage and the highly civilized man are vastly different. One is tempted to believe at times that the savage has the better end of the bargain. Civilized man, from the time he enters school at six or seven, until he is able to work no longer because of old age, rises at a certain time each morning, goes at a stated hour to an appointed place, stays a specified number of hours for study or work, then returns to his home. This program is seldom varied.

The savage has no program. He rises one morning, comes upon the track of game, begins a hunt that may lead him far and consume two days and a night. The game at last run down and captured, he eats, then lies

down to sleep while the sun goes round the earth and returns to shine again. Waking, he eats again. Then finding that some part of his hunting tog requires attention, he consumes unlimited hours on the task.

It was so with Omnakok, the hunchback. Johnny, lying propped up among the deer skins, watched him shaving away at the slab of tough wood for two hours before he realized what he was about.

"He's making a bow," he told himself, "a bow, that's it. Wonder what sort of wood it is?"

To this question he could find no answer. Many strange woods were found here. Besides, it is known that trade between the strange northern tribes extends over thousands of miles.

"May have come from Russia or Greenland," he told himself.

When his bumps and bruises began to make themselves felt and his eyes grew heavy he dropped back among the deer skins and,

entrusting himself to the One who notes the sparrow's fall, passed into the land of dreams.

When he awoke, several hours later, the bow was fully fashioned but still the hunchback stood bending over it.

"He's backing it with some tissue," the boy told himself. "I know. It's reindeer sinew. I've heard of that. A bow so backed will never crack."

Then a thought struck him all of a heap.

"He's making that bow for me!" His heart gave a great leap. Perhaps no boy in all the world ever felt such real joy over prospects of a new bow.

That it was intended for him he could not doubt for, though made on the same lines and in the identical manner of Omnakok's own, it was much lighter.

"Fifty pounds, perhaps sixty," he told himself. "How well he has judged my strength."

Sitting up, he felt his bumps. "Not so bad. Guess I could walk." He stood up, took a few steps, made a wry face, rubbed his legs,

took a few more steps, then gave vent to a low laugh. He was getting fit; be able to travel soon.

Having placed the damp sinew, well mixed with fish glue, at the back of the bow, Omnakok placed the bow before the fire, then dropping into a corner, with legs crossed and long arms hanging down, he fell asleep.

On tiptoe Johnny wandered from corner to corner of the cabin. He had been right. There was no food. The hunchback had shared his last meal.

"Some old sport," he thought. "Not so bad for a savage."

"When he wakes," he told himself, "my new bow will be dry. Then we will go for a hunt. Wonder what the game will be like?"

Had he known he surely must have shuddered. Had he known what was happening to his good pal Faye Duncan, he must have rushed from the cabin in a mad desire to reach her side and bring her aid. Knowing none of these things, he replenished the fire, then

sat down patiently to wait the next move on the strange checkerboard of life.

Faye Duncan and her grandfather had joined the Indians in a meal of stewed bear meat. Gordon Duncan had taken his place by the fire for his evening nap, when Tico, who had been sleeping with nose on paws, suddenly rose to sniff the air, then to go away into the night.

Her fear of the unknown overcome by curiosity, the girl followed him. They had not gone a hundred paces before they came to a trail in the snow. Many hours old, even distorted as they were by the melting of the snow, the footprints were unmistakable.

"The—the great banshee!" the girl whispered under her breath.

As for the dog, he lifted up his voice in a howl which was an unmistakable plaint for a lost friend. Little wonder. The trail had been made by the hunchback as he had carried Johnny to his cabin.

Having completed his dirge of the night, Tico, nose to the snow, went trotting away.

"He's on the trail of the great banshee!" The girl gripped her breast to still her heart's wild beating. "Sha—shall I follow? Dare I?"

She answered her own question by again taking up the trail.

A quarter mile farther on, she came to that which made her start and stare. A little to one side of the trail, a dark spot stood out against the whiteness of the earth's snow blanket.

"A—a mitten," she said, picking it up. "It, why it—" again she strove in vain to still her heart. "It's Johnny's!"

Who can say what wild thoughts surged through her breast as she stood there in the snow beneath the starry heavens, alone in a vast hostile wilderness?

Whatever they may have been, they at last urged her on at redoubled speed. So, half walking, half running, she came at last to the

brink of the river. And there catastrophe befell her.

At this point on his long journey the hunchback had descended a sloping bank of snow to travel for a time upon the river's ice which was still frozen to the bank. Since his passing, the ice had broken away. Many yards of his trail had gone floating downstream.

Knowing nothing of this, the girl tried in vain to discover the way he had gone.

"He can't have taken to the river," she told herself. "Still, there may have been a boat. "There—"

In leaning over the bank for a better look, she loosened the undermined mass of snow and together they plunged into the racing river.

"It's the end," she told herself in despair as she felt the sting of icy water. "No one can live in such a torrent."

But what was this? Something touched her cheek. It was Tico. Seeing his mistress

adrift, he had plunged boldly in, determined to live or die with her.

"Good old Tico!" Her voice choked. "We'll die fighting."

At that she put forth all her strength in an effort to regain the bank.

"But what's the use?" she thought. "It's only a steep bank of snow. No one could scale it."

With that thought, hoping against hope that something might come her way, a log, a snag, an overhanging tree, she gave herself over to drifting and quiet strokes that kept her afloat.

CHAPTER XXI

THE BATTLE OF THE BEARS

Much sooner than Johnny expected, the hunchback awoke. Perhaps the pangs of hunger were making themselves felt. Be that as it may, the night was not half gone when, each armed with a stout bow and a quiver of arrows, they stole out into the vivid moonlight.

"Night hunting," Johnny thought. "Wonder what sort of game will be afoot at such an hour? Have to be large. Can't see well enough for snowshoe rabbit or ptarmigan."

He was soon enough to know.

* * * *

As Faye drifted rapidly downstream, now threatened by floating fragments of ice, and now caught and whirled around by mad

swirls of racing water, she expected every moment to reach the end of life. So long, however, as the faithful Tico swam at her side she could not give up hope. So, with the moon painting a mocking golden path to shore and all the starry reflections dancing about her, she drifted on.

But what was this? Something cut her face. Another. This time came a stinging blow. Putting up a hand to protect herself, she grasped something and held on for a second.

"Willows," she told herself. "Overhanging willows. There's a chance—"

Again her hand went up. At once it was struck a glancing blow.

"Oh—Oo!" The pain in her wrist for the moment was intense, yet she persevered. The next attempt was better. Arrested in her mad flight, she swung round and hung there for a second. Once more her hold was broken. Not however until her other hand had gone up. Before the current had gotten her under

way, she had gripped a stouter, stiffer branch. With a supreme effort she threw herself half out of the water to grasp the branch with her free hand.

The branch was strong. It held her half free from the water. Another struggle and she was astride the branch. At once the branch was submerged. But riding so, she was able to look about her and to catch a few fleeting thoughts as to how the affair would end.

The branch, she discovered, had swung in quite close to shore. There was a rim of ice before her, but by working her way down the branch she could reach a position close to other and stronger branches.

"I'll get hold of those and swing up," she said aloud.

To her surprise she caught an answering sound.

"Tico!" she called as she caught the dog's encouraging woof.

By the moonlight she made out his form,

dancing on the shore. How had he made it? She was astonished. But leave it to a dog!

Ten minutes of heart-breaking struggle and her hands gripped a stronger branch. Even this dipped low, leaving her only abreast of the ridge of ice. With one hand she gripped the slippery surface. For a second she held on, then all but plunged head foremost into the tide.

"I must!" she told herself. "It's my chance. My strength is leaving me."

Once more she threw herself forward. This time as she felt herself slipping back she was seized by the collar of her stout mackinaw and pulled like a rag doll, up, up, up until she lay flat on the ice, completely exhausted, but safe.

"Good old Tico!" she breathed faintly. "Good Tico!"

The dog licked her cold cheeks.

When strength returned, she crept forward until she found herself on a bank of soft snow. There she stood up and looked about

her. Matters did not seem much improved. She was on a narrow island in the midst of the river. The night was cold. It had been thawing during the day. Now it was freezing.

"Got—got to get these things off." Her teeth were chattering.

Struggling with her sodden garments, she got them off one by one and, after wringing them out, hung them on the willows. At last, quite undressed, she danced about and beat off the dampness that still clung to her. Such garments as could be managed under the condition she drew on again.

As her hand touched the pocket of her mackinaw she felt something hard.

"Matches," she laughed in spite of her despair. "And yet—"

It was a little wooden box of sulphur matches such as are used in the North. They had been wrapped in oiled cloth.

"Might be a chance," she told Tico solemnly. "Nothing like hoping."

After drying her hands on some dead wil-

low leaves that still clung to the branches, she carefully unwrapped the little box.

"Seems dry." Her heart beat faster.

With elaborate care she gathered willow leaves and small dry twigs, then laid on larger branches.

"If it works, Tico! If it only does!"

The first tiny match turned blue, sent up sulphurous fumes and went out. The second did the same. Hope was ebbing when the blue of the third match turned to red and the dry leaves were kindled.

"Whoops! Whoopee!" the girl shouted, dancing up and down. "We win! We win!"

So they did. Fifteen minutes later a roaring flame was mounting toward the sky. Dry leaves and green willows make a hot fire.

Before this fire, turning round and round like a top, was the girl, while on willow branches, close as she dared have them, were her steaming garments.

Johnny Longbow saw the light of that fire

against the sky, but a hill lay between him and the river. He believed the reflection to be a display of Northern Lights.

They were hunting, he and the hunchback, when he saw that light. A moment after he saw it the hunchback showed him that which set his blood racing and drove all thoughts of the light out of his head.

It was strange, this hunting in the moonlight—strange and a bit uncanny. From over the silver crested hills, the moon shone upon them. Shadows black as ink were all about them. Every little depression in the snow seemed a deep well of mystery. Beneath their feet the snow, softened as it had been by the day's thaw, gave forth not the slightest sound.

So, with bows unstrung and quivers swinging at their sides, they advanced upon a low hill. Mounting this, they dropped down upon the other side.

They were half way down the slope when the hunchback, stopping dead in his tracks,

braced his bow and nocked an arrow. He stood there, a grotesque statue in the moonlight.

"What has he seen?" the boy asked himself. Then, without knowing the reason for it, he put the lower end of his bow against his instep and bent it. After that he selected a broadhead from his quiver. Still he saw nothing, heard nothing.

"It's strange," he thought, "Strange and—"

His thoughts broke short off. Down in the center of the valley, not fifty yards before them where the shadow of the hill plunged all in midnight blackness, something had stirred. After that had come a grunt.

"Like a pig," Johnny thought. "But of course—"

Again his thoughts broke off. A head had risen above the shadow line, a great grizzly head with a red, lolling tongue. This was no pig.

One instant it was there, the next it was gone. But the boy had seen enough to set

his heart racing. Squatting down with one knee on the snow, he swung his bow into place and waited.

He had not long to wait. The creature, a great northern grizzly bear, was moving now. She was coming out of the shadows. Johnny's breath came hard as he saw the size of her. His heart stopped beating altogether when he realized that she was leading two half grown cubs.

"Bows and arrows," he thought. Never had they seemed such frail weapons as now, yet he was prepared to do his best.

As these thoughts passed through his mind, the three bears moved out into the field of light.

Johnny felt a light pressure on his arm. He understood. They were to shoot. Once more his heart raced. Yet his hand was steady as he drew his bow. By instinct he seemed to understand that he was to shoot at the larger of the two cubs. The hunchback would aim at the great beast's heart.

"Here's hoping!" Johnny's whole body stiffened. His arrow flew, and with it another.

In an instant there was tumult in the bears' camp. Having neither seen nor smelled their enemies, both the cubs and the old one blamed his companion for the pain that had leaped upon them from the dark. At once they fell upon one another. Such growling and roaring, such cuffing and scratching Johnny had not known in his life.

It was all so ludicrous that he wanted to roll in the snow with laughter. Yet there was a more serious side. Neither of the bears had received a mortal wound. Tumbling about as they were now, there was little chance for a good shot. How long would it be before they discovered their mistake and came charging up the hill? Nocking a second arrow, he awaited the next turn of events.

* * * *

From her island fastness Faye Duncan heard the noise of battle, and shuddered. Growling savagely, the dog marched back

and forth in the snow. But neither girl nor dog knew what it was all about.

One thought was uppermost in the girl's mind. She must get off the island and rejoin her companions. But how was this to be done? She had saved her Indian friends from a similar predicament, but now there was no yarn to bring a rawhide rope to her. Besides, the rope was now far back in the camp of women and children.

A little ice was passing. Mere fragments, these would not support her weight. She was interested to note, however, that swinging round a sharp bend, the current brought these fragments very near the bank.

"If only they were large enough to support my weight!" she thought.

But the fire was burning low. The night chill was creeping in. Her clothing was not yet dry.

"More wood," she thought as she twisted away at a tough willow branch.

* * * *

In the meantime the battle of bears was slowing down. Seeing an opening, the hunchback sent a second arrow crashing into the ribs of the old grizzly. Was it this arrow that suggested a foe from without? As the bear's great head turned about, the bristle hair on her neck and shoulders began to rise.

Johnny saw it as in a dream. He woke from the dream with a start when the grizzly, at a pace not exceeded by the fastest horse, charged straight up the hill.

For this the hunchback was prepared. He had lain five of his best arrows, tipped with points of volcanic glass, side by side in the snow. Now, as if shot from some new form of repeating blowgun, one by one these arrows went crashing into the charging monster.

As for Johnny, his usually alert mind seemed frozen. Only after the hunchback's third arrow had found its mark with the beast still plowing forward did he get into action. Then, realizing that his arrow, a

good broadhead with razor edge, was in place, he wondered where to aim.

There was no time to be lost. Instinctively he picked the beast's lolling red mouth. Twang! The arrow sped. The next instant, to his vast astonishment, he saw the bear rear high, utter one wild roar and drop backward dead.

Three shots from the hunchback's bow silenced the two younger bears forever. Then it was time for investigation. The arrow that Johnny shot had entered the bear's mouth, had pierced the thin bone at the top and had entered the brain.

As the hunchback realized this, he turned and looked at Johnny. A smile overspread his face and he patted the boy clumsily on the shoulder.

After that, leaving the old bear where she lay, he partially skinned one of the cubs and, after slinging a good hundred pounds of meat across his shoulder, beckoned the boy to follow.

CHAPTER XXII

THE HUNCHBACK LEADS ON

Someone else saw the light of Faye's fire against the sky. Sitting crosslegged on their deerskins, the two Indians squinted at it for a time in stolid silence. After that a few guttural exclamations passed between them. Then, having drawn their moccasins on, they hurried away down the river, leaving Gordon Duncan asleep by the fire.

What words had they spoken? Had they judged the girl too long gone from camp? Did they fear for her safety? Or did they suspect a hostile encampment?

Whatever it may have been, they traveled rapidly. Passing through a clump of pine trees they chose two hard knots, then hurried on. By the time they came within sight

of the island Faye's clothes were dry. She had donned them again, and might be seen moving about replenishing the fire. Accustomed as they were to accurate observation of living things at a distance, the Indians had no trouble in recognizing her.

At once they lighted their torches. The girl saw, and her heart leaped with joy. Her plight had been discovered. Here was hope.

Noting that the ice fragments that drifted by were growing larger, she endeavored to calculate the possibility of riding one to safety.

"Won't do," she told Tico. "Not yet."

* * * *

Though Johnny Longbow had seen the light of his good friend's fire, and she in turn had heard the noise of his battle with the bears, morning was destined to find them once more far apart. To Johnny's great surprise the hunchback, after replenishing their larder, did not lead the way back to the cabin where they had last slept.

Instead he struck away across the hills. When they had traveled for the greater part of an hour and had come to a barren and rocky dry ravine, he piled a heap of large stones in the form of a rude oven. Beneath this he kindled a fire and roasted meat.

After giving Johnny a liberal supply of bear meat and devouring great quantities himself, he again took up his burden and led away over other hills.

"How is this all to end?" Johnny asked himself. "It doesn't much matter where we go. I haven't the slightest notion which direction would lead me to my friends."

That the hunchback was pleased with him was shown by his actions as they paused now and then to rest. At such times he went through the motions of a charging bear. Opening his mouth wide he acted a pantomime of receiving a mortal wound in the mouth, and falling backward dead. These actions were followed by loud laughter.

"This," Johnny told himself, "probably indicates approval."

He was not the least bit displeased that the hunchback held a friendly feeling for him; yet he was led to wonder many times and how long he was to wander and how the affair was to end.

* * * *

Faye's escape from her island was less dramatic than that of the Indians she had saved. As she waited, a surprisingly large cake of ice drifted by. Seizing the opportunity, she sprang once more into the chilling waters, swam a few strokes, clambered aboard, drifted close to shore, was caught and dragged to land by the husky natives. Then, followed by the dripping Tico, she raced away to camp.

For a second time that night her garments were hung by a fire to dry. This time, however, she did not dance away the chill, but creeping deep down among the blankets and

deerskins, fell asleep to dream of towering icebergs and racing floods.

* * * *

As he tramped on and on, mile after mile over low ridges, down narrow valleys, through sparse growth of fir and tangled masses of willows, following his strange guide through the night, Johnny wondered over and over what their destination might be.

More than this, his mind was filled with wild speculations regarding the future. What were the plans that revolved in the mind of this hunchback? Had he any plans? His attitude amused Johnny. Of course he was only a boy, but in the wilds where he so often takes a man's part a boy soon enough gets to rate himself as a man.

"He seems to think of me as a child," he told himself after the strange being had finished patting him on the head. "No, not quite that either; more like a cub. That's it, a bear cub."

In a park where bears were protected and

tame, Johnny had often amused himself by watching the actions of mother bears and their cubs.

"He seems a great hunter of bears," Johnny told himself. "No doubt, living as he does in such isolation, he knows more about bears than human beings. But am I to be his cub weeks on end?"

He pictured himself living in the wilderness with this curious wanderer, dressing in skins, hunting with bow and arrow, fishing with crude nets, living the life of a savage.

"No," he told himself. "It can't be."

The hunchback heard. Turning about, he leered at him in a strange fashion. Then they tramped on.

Just as dawn was breaking they came upon a thick growth of fir trees crowning the crest of a hill. At the very center of this they found a cabin.

This cabin was much more perfectly built than the other. The stones for its chimney were cut in squares. The logs had been hewn

off on two sides. And beside the fireplace hung two heavy iron skillets and three stew-pans.

"Did he build it, or appropriate it after some trapper or prospector had left it?" the boy asked himself.

Too weary for thought, he went about the business of frying bear steak over the fire kindled by his companion. After eating, he buried himself in a great heap of furs and lost himself in the land of dreams.

CHAPTER XXIII

THREE BEAR SKINS

Early next morning, before Gordon Duncan was astir, and while the girl still slept the sleep of exhaustion, the Indians crept from beneath their caribou skins and journeyed forth in quest of food.

Within the hour they returned. And such a load as they carried on their backs! Three bear skins and two hundred pounds of meat they cast down upon the ground. Then kicking off the hungry dogs, they cut away broad slices to throw them in the midst of the fighting pack.

"Three bears!" said Faye when she saw them. "How can they have killed them so soon?"

"Not kill," said the Indian who understood English. "Dead, that one, two, three bear."

"Dead! Then there is someone about."

"No. Not anyone."

"Then who killed them?" She was examining one of the skins. The marks she found there had not been made by bullets, but by arrows.

"White man no save," said the Indian, shaking his head. "That one Indian," nodding to his companion, "how you say it? Him one doctor, one shamin. Plenty spirits help him. Spirit eagle, spirit white fox, spirit old man, long time dead, never shoot rifle, always bow and arrow, that one help him.

"So this one morning he say, that one (another nod toward his companion), that one say, 'Spirit of old man, kill bear for my dinner. Kill one, two, three bear. Kill him.' That's all. See old man's tracks, mine. So big!" He stretched out his arms at full length.

"He is trying to tell you," said Gordon Duncan, "that his companion has a familiar spirit; that he is in league with the ghost of an old

man and that the ghost, at his request, has killed three bears."

Faye shook her head. She did not believe it.

"Neither do I." Her grandfather smiled. "But we have the meat. It is enough. Now we may resume our journey in search of Timmie and the green gold."

Had Faye been alone she most certainly would have visited the valley of dead bears. Had she done so, she must surely have recognized at once the footprints of her lost pal and the "great banshee."

But, looking at the drawn face of her aged sire and realizing what long miles must still lie before him, she permitted him to have his way without a word.

All day the dogs followed the faint trail left by the fleeing Timmie and his wolfhounds. That night they camped beneath a sheltering cliff that lay at the foot of a heavily timbered hill. At the crest of that hill was a cabin, and in that cabin Johnny Longbow slept. Had a shot been fired by one of the Indians he must

have heard it. No shot was fired. There was food in abundance. Besides, there was nothing to kill.

So, early next morning, they prepared again for the trail.

"Wonder why they carry those raw skins along," Faye said to Gordon Duncan as the natives lashed the three bear pelts to their sled. "They weigh as much as our whole kit. And what possible good can they be?"

"Faye," the old man rumbled, "to a native of this land a pelt of any kind is a precious thing. All year round he dresses in skins, always he sleeps beneath them. His home in summer is built of them, and in winter they form the floor mat which protects his feet from the cold earth. His dog harness is made of skins, his sled lashed together with them. To these Indians a pelt is a thing of great value. To cast it away is to offend the spirit of the dead bear."

All that he said was true enough. Too soon he was to discover the real reason these sturdy

little brown men were willing to put their own shoulders to the harness that the skins might remain upon the sled.

As they broke camp that day, Faye found herself wondering about many things. Would they come up with Timmie? Did he carry on his sled the strange collection of green gold antiques? Was he truly attempting to run away with the gold? If so, why? And what of Johnny, her good pal of the long trail? They had experienced many adventures together. Would their trails ever cross again? She could not quite believe him dead.

"Adventures," she thought. "How little enjoyment one gets from an adventure when he has no one to share it!"

Adventure came soon enough that day. But first they arrived at that which appeared to be an impasse in their journey.

The trail that morning led for three miles across a barren tundra. There it lost itself in a tangled wilderness of trees and bushes. The

trusty dogs did not so much as falter. Their senses were sure; their aim true.

But what was this? After an hour of travel through the silent forest they came to an abrupt halt. Before them lay a tangled mass of freshly cut boughs.

"He made camp here last night," said Faye as her heart gave a great leap. "Per—perhaps he is still here."

Certainly she hoped this might be true. The trail had been long, very, very long, and she was weary. It was not the weariness that comes from one day of strenuous toil, but the bone weariness of the long, long trail.

"He's gone!" Gordon Duncan said a moment later. "Gone down the river."

"Not—not down the river!" Faye passed round the pile of brush, to drop weakly to earth as she read unmistakable signs of a raft built and pushed off from the shore.

"To think," she said, her eyes reflecting the tragedy of her heart, "he was here working while we slept! And now he is gone; gone

forever. And we have come all this way but to know defeat!"

"We must follow," said Gordon Duncan.

"The break-up will come. We will perish!"

"We must trust God, and go."

"But how?"

The Indians answered this question. Producing their bear skins they began cutting willows.

"We make skin boat," they said. "Tie wood together so; stretch skin so; sew it this way; not leak. Very good boat. Ride water. Ice not break. Very strong. Very good."

"Wonderful!" said Gordon Duncan. "God sent you to us."

"Eh-eh, the Great Spirit," said the Indian.

Late that afternoon, in a boat that might have been made by some primitive man three thousand years before, they glided from the shore and away through the water that ran above the surface of six foot ice which, soon enough, would rise and go booming and crowding and grinding toward the sea.

Faye's heart missed a beat as she took her place in the prow. They were facing grave dangers. Would this be her last ride?

And yet it was to be a race, a race between a raft and a skin boat on a turbulent river. Races are always thrilling. Soon her nerves were all a-tingle.

CHAPTER XXIV

LEFT BEHIND

That the hunchback was a great sleeper Johnny was soon enough to know. After their long journey he slept far into the day. Even after he awoke he appeared to be in a dull stupor, produced, Johnny supposed, by eating great quantities of bear meat.

Grateful as he was for the rest, the boy found himself growing restless. Longing to know more about his strange surroundings and especially eager to discover whether or not he was in a region visited at times by white men, he slipped out of the cabin, then went slipping and sliding down the steep hill.

He discovered little enough. In the scrub forest he found no mark of the white man's axe. Had he chanced to go down the other

slope he would have seen plenty, as you will know. For two days, the while preparing his raft, the aged recluse had camped at the far end of that slope.

After a two-hour ramble, Johnny returned to the cabin. In one pocket was a double handful of last year's blueberries. In one hand he carried two grouse which had fallen before his bow.

"These," he told himself, "will make a more appetizing meal than greasy bear meat."

The hunchback sat just as he had left him, doubled up in the corner, asleep or at least dozing.

"He hibernates like a bear," the boy told himself in disgust.

"I could leave him," he thought later as he plucked the feathers from his two birds. "Strike right away into the wilderness, be gone so far and so fast that he'd never find me."

There was a thought for you. But did he want to leave? Crude and repulsive as the

creature was, he had beyond doubt saved his life. Then, too, he knew the ways of the country, was used to procuring food in it. With no companion one might easily meet up with starvation on the trail.

"Anyway," he concluded, "if he keeps this up, at least I will get out and see more of the country. May find a way out. To-morrow I will go toward the river."

Had he but known it, at that very moment Gordon Duncan was lighting his campfire at the foot of the hill. He did not know it. Since the scrub forest was dense here, no gleam of firelight, no whiff of smoke announced to him the presence of his friends. So once more, in the midst of rich furs he fell asleep.

Before his strange host was up and about the boy crept from the cabin to go tramping away through the silent forest. The rise on which the cabin stood was more a ridge than it was a hill. It ran for miles along the river.

The slope on the river side was steep and rocky. In places there were sheer precipices

of forty or fifty feet. To avoid a dangerous fall, he continued along the crest of the ridge.

Having caught a gleam of water far below, he realized that he was following down the stream. At last, wearying of continual attempts to find a way down, hoping to discover a pass, he climbed a steep rocky pinnacle that gave him an unobstructed view of the river.

There he saw that which brought an exclamation to his lips and set his heart beating wildly. A boat had just pushed off from the bank and was swinging out into mid-channel. Lacking efficient paddles, the men at prow and stern were managing the craft with poles. A curious sort of boat it was, crudely built and hard to navigate; yet these Indians managed it well.

"Indians," Johnny thought. "But the two in the center of the boat. One's a girl. The other's too tall. He—"

Of a sudden, like a revelation it came to him. The man was Gordon Duncan, the girl Faye.

With a sudden headlong rush, he was off the rocky tower and away down the hill. Little matter now that the way was steep and rocky. This was a race, a hurdle race for a precious prize.

"If only they stall the boat. If only they turn back," he panted as, gripping the bough of a spruce tree, he fairly hurled himself to the next tree. Down, down, down. Now a rocky ledge, now a glistening bank of snow, now a clump of trees, over, under, through he went until at last, ragged, torn, bleeding, he reached level land and in time the river's brink.

"Too late," he groaned as his eyes swept the river. Not a moving thing was to be seen on its surface.

"It—it—why, it's as if I dreamed that I saw them," he said aloud.

As if to convince himself that he had not been dreaming, he followed along the bank to the spot where the crude bearskin boat had pushed off. There he found unmistakable

signs; footprints told who had been there but an hour before.

"Left behind!" He buried his face in his hands.

At that instant a sound from behind him caused him to start. Turning quickly about, he found himself staring into the beady eyes of the hunchback.

CHAPTER XXV

ADVENTURE IN PANTOMIME

On a river ever broadening as it made its way toward the far distant sea, rode a crude skin canoe. In the canoe rode Gordon Duncan, his granddaughter Faye and the two Indians. They had not left that canoe since they entered it, and that had been sixteen hours back.

To the white man and the girl this wild journey had been a constant strain; to the Indians it was but the day's work. Many times before for twenty, thirty hours they had ridden thus without sleeping.

To land now was impossible; to turn back was out of the question. Besides, who would turn back? Had they not, but a quarter of an hour ago, caught a glimpse of that which they sought?

They had rounded a rocky ledge where the river ran between low hills and had come upon a long, straight stretch of water. At the end of that stretch a dark object specked the water.

Gordon Duncan had lifted the glass once to his eyes and said:

"It's Timmie."

The raft and the man had disappeared at once beyond a bend in the river; yet there was now ground for hope. And here they were still driving their boat forward, still hoping that before disaster befell that aged recluse and his crazy craft, they might overtake him and save him from a terrible death. For, should they fail, disaster from crowding ice, rushing rapids and the mad spring upheaval must surely overtake him.

"And he once saved my life," said Gordon Duncan. "We may have been hasty, followed him too far. It's too late to think of that now. We can only follow on."

The journey thus far had been exciting,

but quite safe. There was a wild charm about it all, the racing water, the black, brown and green of fleeting landscape, the occasional flocks of wild ducks that shot by them, and the smell of spring everywhere charmed the young Scotch girl.

Yet it was dangerous. They might meet disaster at any turn. Her grandfather had told Faye this, and she believed it. The water they passed over at first had seemed white. That was because the winter ice still lay still beneath the surface water that had rushed down from hills and mountains.

"If it should rise beneath us!" she said with a shudder.

When, after a half hour of dreamy half-sleeping, she looked at the water, it was black.

"Ice has gone out down here," her grandfather explained.

"Then we are safe?"

"Far from it. The ice before us may jam at any point. It will then pile mountain high. If

there are steep banks as here, we will face disaster."

The girl did not say, "Then why not turn back?" She knew the man too well. He had seen what seemed to him a duty. He could but go on.

"If only Johnny Longbow were here!" she thought.

* * * * *

Johnny Longbow was surprised and not a little frightened on seeing the hunchback close beside him.

"What now?" he thought as his heart skipped a beat. "He was not so sleepy as I supposed. He's followed me. Did he believe me to be running away? If so, what then?"

Whatever might be the strange creature's feelings in the matter, the grin he bestowed upon Johnny was friendly enough. His actions during the next few minutes showed plainer than words that he knew more than Johnny did about the whole affair.

Selecting a smooth surface of snow, he

scooped out a channel for a distance of twenty feet. This channel was a foot wide and two inches deep. Next, having searched out a bundle of brittle twigs, he began breaking one up and laying the pieces side by side in the bottom of the channel. When he had constructed a rude square some eight inches across, he selected certain bent and twisted bits of wood and, with a skill that seemed extraordinary, created a tiny image of a man with a paddle in his hand. This he placed well to the front upon the small platform. Back of this he built up a miniature sled and four dogs.

All this was Greek to Johnny. When, however, with a few clever twists the man had made a small boat and, after placing four figures within it, had dropped it in the shallow channel, it all came to Johnny like a flash.

"The snow channel represents the river," he told himself. "The figures in the skin boat are my friends and the two Indians. But that before them must be a raft. What of that?"

He studied over this for some time without reaching a conclusion. That a raft was passing on before his friends, and that it carried a man, a sled and four dogs, this much was certain. But who was the man?

"Don't matter," he told himself. "Might be anyone, a trapper, a prospector, a lone Indian. But my comrades have gone ahead. How am I to overtake them?"

In his eyes as he tried in vain to catch some glimpse of those who had glided from his field of vision was a glint of despair.

The hunchback, who during all this time had been studying his face, did not appear satisfied.

Selecting larger sticks, he constructed on the ground a larger raft. With infinite pains he built up a new wooden man, four dogs and a sled.

Then, with equal care he began moulding small models from snow. One was a rude cooking pot, another a flat pan, a third a prehistoric lamp. Other figures were added.

When all these were done, he piled them on the newly made raft, and atop them all, a disc of metal taken from a pocket of his skin trousers.

Still Johnny did not understand. When he shook his head, the hunchback seized the metal affair and pressed it into his hand.

"Green," he told himself as he turned it over, "Green like copper, but heavy as lead. What can it be? What—

"Green gold!" he cried excitedly. "And now I understand. It is Timmie and his green gold they are following. He rides ahead on a raft."

Seeing that he was at last understood, the hunchback roared with hoarse laughter.

After that, having seized Johnny's hunting knife, with a few clever strokes he shaped a miniature canoe. In this he placed two sticks. After pointing to one, he struck Johnny a light blow. Then, after touching the other, he smote his own breast.

Dropping the toy canoe in the snow channel, he moved it along until it was abreast the

skin boat. Then both boats overtook the raft.

"That's plain enough," the boy told himself. "We are to get into a boat and pursue them. We will overtake my friends. Then together we will overhaul Timmie and his raft load of dogs and green gold. Only question is, where's our boat?"

As if understanding the question, the hunchback laid heavy hands upon him, turned him half about and marched him down the river.

CHAPTER XXVI

INTO THE ICE JAMB

"Ah!" sighed Gordon Duncan, as once more they caught sight of Timmie's raft. "We shall be up with him soon. Once we are close, when he sees my face he will know it is I, his friend Gordon Duncan. We will bring him and his treasure to the outside world. His last days shall be happy ones after all."

"But look!" exclaimed the girl, gripping his arm.

One look, and he started to his feet. The white-haired man before them appeared to leap and dance upon the water. Appearances were deceiving. The raft leaped and danced over rapids. And mingled with the rapids were broken fragments and great heaps of ice. Here the water boiled and foamed, there it rushed like mad.

"We shall all be drowned!" said the girl, gripping the old man's arm.

"Trust God," the man murmured. "I only fear for Timmie."

Then, of a sudden, things happened. They had been coming nearer and nearer to the clumsy raft when, as they turned a sharp bend in the river, they saw that the aged recluse faced disaster. Stretching all the way across the river was ice piled forty feet high. Jambing, screeching, rolling and tumbling, it threatened all life that came near. And there was the white haired recluse headed straight for it.

"He has only a pole. He can't guide the thing. He's lost!" groaned Gordon Duncan.

He did not know the skill of the man. Poking at a cake of ice here, fanning the water with his pole there, jabbing, poling, fighting his best, the raftsman drove his clumsy craft toward the western bank. It seemed that he would make the bank before the gurgling

waters drew 'him into that maelstrom. Faye held her breath and hoped.

Now he was thirty feet from the bank, now twenty, now—now he rose to his feet as if for a try at a leap. His four dogs howled dismally. He looked at them in dismay. That look was his undoing. An eddy caught his raft and carried it toward midstream. The next instant a redoubled pull of current shot him forward.

Only one hope remained. By the left shore, crowding thirty feet out over the water, was a glacier-like snowbank. Solidly joined to the shore as it was, this bank did not heave and roll as did the free ice. Only beneath it the black waters raced. Between the hard packed snow and the river's surface was a broad dark line. This was an air space where the snow had been worn away by higher water.

"He can't go under," Gordon Duncan breathed. "He'd be killed. He must jump for the solid snow. It's his only hope."

The Indians in the skin canoe were battling

the current to bring their canoe ashore. As for Gordon Duncan and Faye, they had eyes only for the drama that was being enacted there before them.

"Bravo!" murmured Gordon Duncan as a great dog, leaping far and wide, made the snow bar in safety. One, two, three, four, the dogs were away.

And now, now! Faye breathed in little gasps. The recluse, standing erect, motionless, prepared to leap. Now he bent low, now he sprang straight up and away.

"He—he's safe!" breathed Gordon Duncan.

But now. What happened? Did the current give the raft a sudden turn? Did the old man's strength suddenly fail? His leap fell short. He struck the snow, tottered there for a second; then, as the raft with its load of precious green gold shot into the darkness beneath the overhanging snowbar, he tottered and fell full into the raging flood.

"He's gone!" exclaimed Gordon Duncan.
"Lost! Lost forever!"

The next instant their boat, guided by the trusty natives, bumped on a shelving bank and they were quickly drawn up to safety.

In the meantime, as if to veil the catastrophe, a fog drifting down over all, hid all, ice, snow and rushing river, from their view. Ten minutes later a resounding roar told them that something terrific was happening on the river.

"The ice jamb is broken," Gordon Duncan said quietly. "The current is now free. It came too late. We have lost!"

* * * * *

Urged on by the impatient hunchback, Johnny fought his way forward through tangled willows, over rock piles and down treacherous slopes of melting snow until of a sudden, with an involuntary shout of joy, he came plump against a large dugout turned upside down upon the ground.

To launch this craft, clumsy as it was, required but a moment's time. Such was the magnificent strength of the hunchback.

And now they had entered the race. With a paddle twice the size and strength of the white man's canoe paddle, the hunchback drove the dugout forward in the rushing waters at a terrific pace.

It was Johnny who first heard the roar of the bursting ice jamb. They were nearly two miles away, but it filled his breast with a wild terror. That his friends rode the torrent before him he knew. What had happened to them? What was about to befall him?

The current was swift. It bore them on rapidly. When the fog dropped down upon them he realized that safety lay in seeking out shelter in some quiet eddy close to the bank.

That this thought was in the hunchback's mind soon became evident. He began hugging the shore.

So intent were they upon reaching a place of safety that they failed to note a picture framed in fog that for ten seconds flashed into view, then was lost forever.

Without knowing why they did so, both

Faye Duncan and her grandfather stood upon the bank as they passed. It was Faye's keen eyes that caught sight of the racing dugout.

"Look!" she cried, quite beside herself. "Johnny, Johnny Longbow and the great banshee!" She was quite beside herself with excitement.

"Calm yourself," said Gordon Duncan. "You must be dreaming. A bad dream. I see nothing."

"I did see them!" she insisted vehemently. "They passed, they passed in the fog!"

"Then," said Gordon Duncan, "we shall doubtless see them later."

"But will we? They are riding the flood. The ice jamb is gone. But there may be others. And, he is with that terrible creature."

"Humanity," said Gordon Duncan quietly, "is everywhere very much alike. He is in God's hands. Beyond doubt the All Seeing One has provided him a friend in this vast wilderness."

"And to think," said the girl more calmly,

a great joy expressed in her tones, "he is alive! He is not dead. Johnny Longbow is not dead!"

She did such a wild dance in the snow that Gordon Duncan could well have believed they were home again and all their troubles over.

* * * * *

In the meantime Johnny and his strange pilot had passed on into the fog. They traveled a good three miles before they came to the haven of refuge they sought, a quiet eddy by the bank of the stream.

With a sigh of relief Johnny unbent his cramped limbs and went ashore.

To his surprise he found the earth soggy with seeping water.

"Been a flood," he thought.

This was true. The breaking of the ice jamb had momentarily clogged the stream. Water had risen rapidly. The bayou had been flooded. Sudden as it had come, so sudden it receded. Not, however, until something had

happened. What this was, Johnny was soon to know.

As he climbed the slope in search of a dry spot, to his vast astonishment, stranded high and dry, he came upon a crude raft laden with strange packages bound up in skins. And clinging to the raft, as if it were still in motion, was a white haired old man.

Johnny wondered at the packages and the man, but he did not wonder long.

"This," he told himself, "is Timmie, the recluse. And the packages on the raft!" His heart beat wildly.

"But first this old man's needs must be attended to."

After disengaging his hands from the raft, Johnny helped the hunchback carry the old man up the hill to a dry spot. There they soon had him stripped of his sodden garments and wrapped in their own deerskins before a roaring fire.

There, for the first time, he opened his eyes and murmured something about "Green gold."

It was four hours later that the boy was wakened from a short doze by the fire by the ring of a rifle shot close at hand.

"Someone near," he told himself. "Wonder who?"

"Hello! Hello there!" he shouted.

"Hello yourself," came back from the hills above.

Three minutes later the boy stood staring in astonishment at four persons who had just emerged from the brush, two Indians, a white man and a girl. There were tears of real joy in his eyes, for the man and girl were his long lost friends Gordon Duncan and Faye.

Their story was quickly told. No longer daring to trust themselves to the treacherous waters, the party had pushed forward on foot in the hope, as had been their good fortune, though in a manner quite unexpected, of finding some trace of the aged recluse and his craft.

As they followed an animal trail a young

caribou had appeared before them. One of the Indians had shot it. This shot had told Johnny of their presence.

So now, here they were all together again. And Timmie was with them. What a joyous reunion it was! Even Timmie, who recognized his pal of other days, seemed happy.

CHAPTER XXVII

GREEN GOLD AT LAST

The story of the aged recluse, Timmie, was soon told. After his companion Gordon Duncan had left him, more than twenty years before, the caribou had come and a fresh supply of provisions was at hand. That spring too, other prospectors had come up the river. In return for his services as a guide, they had supplied him with white man's food.

As the years passed, he had given up hope that Gordon Duncan would return; but even so, he guarded their secret well.

Ever a lover of nature and her solitary haunts, he was content to dwell alone at the foot of the smoking mountains. Every year, as the winter's snow melted away, as the honking geese passed above the rivers and a

million flowers bloomed, he had shouldered pick and pan to begin one more search for the mine of green gold.

"I never found it," he whispered as, buried deep in warm deer skins, he told his story. "But yonder on the raft, just as I was carrying it, you will find the green gold, every piece. Every piece. Just as we found it so many years ago.

"Take it, Gordon Duncan." His whisper came from deep in his throat. For many years I have prized and guarded it. Now it must be entrusted to your hands. I am soon to pass to that happy land where there are no spring torrents, no snow, no cold, no smoking mountains and no night."

"No! No!" said Faye Duncan, pressing his hand. "You are going to find health in the spring sunshine. We will carry you from this dreary land to the place where yellow roses bloom and the air is heavy with the fragrance of daffodils."

Timmie read the distress in her tone. He

smiled and said no more. Yet he knew what he knew, and was content.

"But why did you run from us?" Gordon Duncan asked.

A pained, puzzled look came over the face of the aged recluse. "I do not know. I am growing old. When one is old he becomes afraid of many things."

The hoard of green gold on Timmie's raft was indeed a great treasure. Johnny, who had traveled much and knew the value of such things coming from a very remote past, reckoned their value in many thousands of dollars.

One day, two weeks later, having buried Timmie among the hills he had loved so long, bidding an affectionate farewell to their Indian guides and the strange hunchback, the party of three, Gordon Duncan, Faye and Johnny, put off from shore in a new dugout which their friends had made for them.

Three days later, as they drifted down the silent river which was now quite free from

ice, to their great surprise they caught the distant drum of an airplane.

Straining their eyes, they saw it at last just clearing the mountains to the north. Imagine their surprise when it went out of sight behind the timber not five miles from where they were.

When, two hours later, on rounding a bend in the river, they sighted the camp of more than a hundred white men, their joy knew no bounds.

Soon enough they were told of a fresh gold strike on these upper reaches of the river. The passenger airplane which was bringing men into the country was to start on the return journey in two hours. It was nearing the lunch hour now. They might have dinner at the outskirts of the white man's land if they liked.

Their decision was quickly reached. After a royal feast of white man's food, they bundled their precious relics of green gold aboard the plane and, climbing in, sailed away.

A week later Johnny stood in the doorway of a cabin. Before the cabin yellow roses bloomed and the air was laden with the scent of spring blossoms.

Beside him stood Faye Duncan. No longer garbed in the dull brown and gray of the trail, but in a gay red dress, she was the picture of health and beauty.

Much had been done in these days. A mystery had been cleared up and a fortune assured.

From Faye's own lips Johnny had learned the secret of their hiding away in the north woods so many weeks before. Her grandfather was to have been a witness in a murder trial. He believed the man being tried was innocent, yet he realized that his own testimony would go far toward convicting him. In order to avoid being called as a witness and in order to give time for hot anger to cool and the real culprit to be found, he had hidden away in the forest.

"But now it is all more than right," Faye

had said with tears of joy in her eyes. "The real murderer has confessed; the other man is free."

Gordon Duncan had sold half the green gold for a sum large enough to make him comfortable for life. Timmie's half he had given to a museum, there to remain as a monument to his lost comrade.

Faye and Johnny stood in the doorway watching the sunset fade. Never before had Johnny been so tempted to give up the life of a wanderer and settle down. And yet—

"Letter for you," said Gordon Duncan. Coming up the path, he handed it to Johnny.

The boy read the letter with interest. It was from Curlie Carson. Perhaps you have read about him. Johnny had heard of him. In this letter Curlie proposed that the two of them join in a daring enterprise. Would Johnny go?

Would he? When one frank, daring, straight shooting adventurer says to another

of his kind, "Come, let's go," the answer is sure to be, "Lead on."

"But I'll be back," Johnny said to the ruddy-cheeked Scotch girl as he bade her goodbye next morning. And who can say he will not?

If you wish to read of the adventures entered into by Johnny Thompson and Curlie Carson, you'll find them all written down in a book called, "The Rope of Gold."

